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## AT THE CROSS-ROADS



# AT THE CROSS-ROADS

By  
KAMALADEVI

EDITED BY  
YUSUF MEHERALLY



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## KAMALADEVI

By YUSUF MEHERALLY

**I**F I was asked to name the most intrepid woman in India today, I should unhesitatingly point to Shrimati Kamaladevi. It is not often that one comes across a person in whom the will to dare and do is blended in such proportion. And with courage is allied a rare gentleness. It has ever been her lot to function in an atmosphere of excited controversy. Yet, with what graciousness of spirit and charm of manner she goes about her work !

Her appeal is of one who has not talked, but exemplified in her own life her rebel teachings. Born in a comfortable and luxurious home in accordance with prevalent custom, she was married young and became a widow while still a school-girl. Convention prescribed that she discontinue her studies, and live a 'retired' life, with all the outward marks of sorrow. But young Kamala insisted on continuing in school. Shortly afterwards, she even moved to Madras, from her home town of Mangalore, to join St. Mary's College. There, while still in her teens, she once again startled the orthodox world by getting married to Harin Chattopadhyaya, the gifted poet and brother of Madame Sarojini Naidu. The young people had done their own courting, and the marriage was not only inter-provincial, but also inter-caste. Widow re-marriage was extremely rare then, and so there was a great flutter all around.

It was to be expected that this society wedding should greatly upset the orthodox circles. For Harin was a brilliant and talented youth, standing on the threshold of a promising career, while Kamaladevi was one of the most charming women in the country, vivacious, full of spirit and swayed by high ideals. It was not for nothing that Harin declared that the gods envied him when he moved about with Kamala. This remark evoked a playful retort from the famous Irish poet, W. B. Yeats—  
"Young man, it is not safe to trifle with the gods." Little

indeed did the happy couple know then that this remark made in jest was to prove a prophecy. For, fifteen years later, they separated.

Kamaladevi's thirst for knowledge then as now, was insatiable and she planned to go to England for higher studies. As it happened, finance was no difficulty. Her father held a high post in the Madras Civil Service, while her mother came from one of the richest families in Karnatak. Her uncle was a well-known lawyer, with a wide and lucrative practice. To these advantages of birth and social position Kamaladevi added an indomitable spirit and an eager intellectual restlessness. Before long, she was enrolled as a student at Bedford College and she also attended lectures at the London School of Economics.

When Mahatma Gandhi unfurled the banner of Non-co-operation against the foreign government, Kamaladevi left her college desk in England and returned to India in the service of her country. She thought nothing of her academic career or of the large amounts she had spent in going to Europe—only one thing mattered—the thought of her country struggling to be free.

Right from the start, she was drawn to the women's movement in this country. Her own experiences had taught her how in this man-made world the rigours of social conventions fell most heavily on women. At the very first session of the All-India Women's Educational Conference she was unanimously elected its General Secretary. Later, she was Organising Secretary of the All-India Women's Conference for several years in succession. Her boundless energy set a new standard in devotion and work. With pioneering zeal, she set about travelling, lecturing, making new contacts, forming new branches, encouraging and inspiring the younger generation of women to come forward to take their rightful place in the scheme of things.

Kamaladevi was also the first woman to stand for legislative election. She had returned from another visit to Europe, when she was persuaded at the last minute, to put up her candidature. Several of her well-wishers warned her that she had very little chance, since the time factor was against her. The electoral franchise was very limited and she was pitted against money-bags. But success or failure meant little to her—it was a ques-

tion of vindication of women's rights.

But even in the very few days left to her, her boundless energy electrified the whole atmosphere. The opposing candidate had to spend thousands. When the result was declared, Kamaladevi lost by a mere 200 votes. Everyone was astonished at this performance and even the opposite camp admitted that if there was a little more time at her disposal, the result would have been different. Orthodoxy had put in all its weight to defeat a candidate who had hitherto so successfully defied its fiat, and for once it had its revenge !

Even then the campaign had a tremendous educational and political value. But how times have changed in the last few years ! If Kamaladevi now cared to stand for any legislative election, she would probably be returned unopposed, or at any rate by such an overwhelming majority that her opponent would forfeit the election deposit. This is natural enough, for she is today one of the most popular leaders of the country.

This remarkable popularity is undoubtedly the result of her work and sacrifices in the national movement. Side by side with the Women's Movement she has been a tireless worker for the freedom of India. In the late nineteen-twenties, the Youth Movement found a rebirth and filled so much of the Indian political horizon. Kamaladevi was one of its most prominent leaders. The advent of the Simon Commission in 1928 started a new furore. The principal political parties resolved upon its boycott. The cry of 'Simon, Go Back' started by the Bombay Youth League, rang from one corner of the country to the other. Kamaladevi was President of the memorable session of the Bombay Presidency Youth Conference at Ahmedabad in December 1929, where the youths enthusiastically backed the demand for independence. Two weeks later, under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, the Indian National Congress set the seal of national approval and made it the nation's demand.

The Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930 found Kamaladevi in the vanguard of the fight. Her work in Bombay caught the imagination of the people. Many are the stories told of her exploits in those days. One day, with a group of lady volunteers, she invaded the precincts of the Bombay Stock Exchange

and sold tiny packets of illegally-made salt for Rs. 40,000 in less than one hour ! She was arrested and when the trying magistrate enquired if she pleaded guilty, she invited him to resign from the service of Imperialism and join her band of civil resisters. Presently, ignoring the rather dazed magistrate, she started selling contraband salt in the court-room itself !

Nine months' imprisonment followed. This was her first term of jail. Since then, she has been a frequent inmate of the prison-house. During one of her sentences, she spent a year in solitary confinement. After each term in jail she came out a physical wreck but with a light in her eyes and a smile on her lips.

Kamaladevi is an ardent Socialist. Her generous heart and progressive social sympathies attracted her quite early to the cause of the downtrodden and the exploited. When the Congress Socialist Party was formed in 1934, she plunged with zest into its activities. The following year, she presided over the All-India Conference of the Party at Meerut. Satyavati Devi was the head of the Reception Committee, and Kamaladevi, President of the Conference. The spectacle of these two remarkable women at the helm of the Socialist conference was widely commented upon as symptomatic of the new status of women in Indian public life.

Kamaladevi loves travel. Her political and social work has taken her to every part of India. She has thrice visited Europe and once gone round the world. She has represented India at no less than five International Women's conferences, at such different centres as Geneva, Berlin, Prague, Elsinore, and Copenhagen.

The outbreak of World War II found her in London. The demand of the Indian National Congress for a clarification of British War Aims and how they would apply to the question of India's freedom, brought the Indian case before the bar of world opinion. The flagrant contradiction in England's position—that she was fighting for freedom everywhere—and her flagrant denial of freedom to India, where she held power in her own hands, was plain for all the world to see. Skilful British censorship, however, blotted out all inconvenient news from India

and at the same time clever British propaganda flooded the world, and especially the United States of America, with misrepresentation of India's case

To counter this artful propaganda Kamaladevi resolved to visit the New World. For the next eighteen months, from October 1939 to March 1941, the American Continent became her home. From New York to San Francisco and from Boston to Mexico City, large and appreciative audiences crowded her lectures. She contacted some of the most influential personalities in American public life and acquainted them with the true facts about India. At a time when India's voice was sought to be drowned, her invaluable lecture tour at such great cost and sacrifice to herself was indeed a great service to her country.

In Japan, she received a tremendous reception. Her very first meeting drew an audience of 15,000. Kamaladevi has never compromised with her principles. The rebel in her was up and she openly condemned Japanese aggression on China. This was an act of courage that few indeed would have been capable of.

Imagine, therefore, her surprise when in Hong Kong the British police arrested her on board the ship itself! She was on her way to Chungking to see something of China at war. The intervention of the Chinese Government brought about her release. Subsequently, she visited both Free China as well as the occupied territory and met the heads of both the Governments—Marshal Chiang Kai shek and Wang Chung wai. Her impressions of her Far Eastern tour are contained in two interesting little books—*In War Torn China* and *Japan Its Weakness and Strength*.

Kamaladevi has a highly artistic temperament. She is not only a lover but a connoisseur of the fine arts. Her delight in music is great and she has herself a pleasant voice.

What are her chief characteristics? The first is common sense. The second a capacity for getting difficult things done without fuss or hustle. She always carries a typewriter with her even on her travels, much to the exasperation of her friends, and sits in a crowded third class railway compartment, typing out articles direct on the machine instead of writing them first by hand. She unmistakably gives the impression of being an idealist, who is also a good business woman. And she can tough it out.

In a peasant's dilapidated hut, she feels as much at home as in a Maharani's glittering palace. And what is more, she knows how to make both the peasant woman and the Maharani feel at ease, after they have been with her for two minutes.

Once again at a critical hour in 1944 she was called upon from her sick-bed, to lead the women of India. Her work as President of the All-India Women's Conference during 1944-46 will remain memorable in the history of that august body. From a respectable gathering of society ladies it was transformed into the premier women's institution in the country, not only in name but also in fact.

When Jawaharlal was elected President of the Indian National Congress for the fourth time—an honour never before accorded to any Indian public leader, it was but natural that he should invite Kamaladevi to become a member of his new Cabinet, among other things to represent the viewpoint of the new Indian womanhood. Her Socialist colleagues were not joining the Congress Working Committee, but they readily agreed to make an exception in her case, in response to the wishes of the Congress President.

Kamaladevi's appeal has been one of rebellion. The little girl born with a silver spoon in her mouth, bidding good-bye to comfort in the trials and rigours of public life. The school-girl-widow, defying age-old conventions. The restless student crossing the far seas in search of knowledge. The first society lady to go on the stage not for money or fame, but for a new artistic ideal. The first woman to contest a legislative election, laughing at the great odds against her. The tireless and persevering organiser, knocking at inertia, apathy and indifference, spreading encouragement and sunshine around her. The fearless crusader, criticising Japanese invasion of China, in the heart of Japan itself, without caring for the consequences. The unassuming political worker, facing prison after prison, with a radiant smile. Such is Kamaladevi.

## THE SIMPLE CASE FOR DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM\*

“SINCE the world war, the Socialist movement has undergone one crisis after another. With the triumph of Hitler and the consolidation of the Russian dictatorship, the succession of crises seemed to be culminating in a death rattle. Many socialists, men of integrity and intelligence, reluctantly came to the conclusion that they had been on the wrong track. Experience and reflection seemed to reinforce their conviction that the iron heel of totalitarianism had stamped into the ground, together with millions of socialist lives the very ideals of Socialism as feasible options in the present era of history. In order to safeguard the democratic ethos of Socialism, they surrendered their belief in a planned collectivist economy. Some became New Dealers, others, advocates of a mixed economy, a phrase that covers the whole spectrum of social forms ; still others became defenders of the capitalistic *status quo* ” So said an article in the *New Leader* of America.

The collapse of the Second International, that is, of its leadership, and an inability on the part of its constituents to rally the rank and file to meet the challenge stoutly and effectively, was bound to bring disaster to the Socialist movement on its very heels. Such a collapse can only come of an absence of a deep experience of a positive social philosophy. For it is not enough to talk of faith and conviction. Faith may spring instinctively from a strong mental attraction towards an ideal, reiterated wishful thinking, or a favourable temperamental bias. But for that faith to pass into conviction, experience has to step in like an alchemist who transforms. The question is, how is the experience provided ? Of course, through the programme of work which is the instrument by which the Socialist State is built up. That is why revolution in the sense of a mighty upheaval is not enough to create a Socialist society. The process has also to be faithfully worked out through the entire period of effort and striving.

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\* *Caravan*, 1947.



It is necessary to bear in mind that human beings cannot live together in the world without conflict of interests arising at some point. Harmony in living comes out of an inner satisfaction, a fulfilment of our dreams, hopes and aspirations. But at the same time life is fraught with limitations of all sorts. Life cannot meet every demand, nor satisfy every material or psychological need. A society that can find everything for everybody at the same time, on any plane, seems too utopian for practical purposes, at least at this stage of human development. Conflict is inevitable, even with the attainment of a highly efficient society. In fact conflict is as much of a human ingredient, as friendliness. One may as well say anger will be unknown in a Socialist society. One can certainly venture it will be reduced in proportion to better adjustment of the individual to the society, and the creation of a more harmonious atmosphere. What a social philosophy aims at, therefore, is negotiating these conflicts with a view to reducing the clashes to the absolute minimum. Socialism has therefore to create institutions and methods that can execute these delicate tasks. In democratic socialism, the ideal is to evolve only such techniques and institutions as will smoothen out the frictions with a *minimum of coercion*, overt or implicit, and a *maximum of collective participation*. In working up towards a Socialist society one keeps this as the regulative ideal.

Disappointment followed by disillusionment usually results from a misconception of equality, by taking it to mean sameness or uniformity. As a matter of fact uniformity never does mean equal justice or even fairness. For what is right and proper for one may be injurious to another, except perhaps in the case of payment for identical work, such as a basic wage, although generalisations even in this instance would be dangerous. For, all types of socially useful work, though of equal concern to society, is not of equal concern to the individuals concerned, where personal liking, aptitude, physical capacity and such other factors play an equally important part.

The only criterion, therefore, is to have the democratic ideal as a regulative barometer—or, as has been often said, equality of concern. Emotional adjustments are comparatively easier in a family, though not without friction. But far more difficult in a

society, especially modern society, where individualities have become more pronounced with the gradual loosening of the community traditions which made for close ties and co-operation. Therefore something analogous to the role of emotion in a family has to be evolved to regulate the social mechanism of a large and heterogeneous group such as present-day society, with a far wider diversity of interests.

A genuine socialist ideal starts from the premise that the aim of social living is the creation of a society of creative personalities, not mere automatons that conform to an ordered plan. Conditions have therefore to be created for the interplay of free individuals who will discipline themselves out of a conscious realisation of their own responsibility towards the collective. The socialist ideal respects the human personality and is fully aware of its delicate shades and tones that would grow discoloured and discordant or fade out into neutrals, unless nurtured by the breath of free air. Hence its emphasis on democratic practices.

The current apprehension, in some cases a dogmatic assertion, that Marxism inevitably means totalitarianism, has no doubt been greatly accentuated by events in Russia and then in Germany; in the latter, in the guise of National Socialism. To most observers, the two seem identical, in each instance a complete state domination, that state in turn dominated by a single-party leadership. Although the leadership may shift from a class to a political group, one has seen that group leadership in itself becoming exclusive, rising out of a new aristocracy of, say, the Stakhanovites, which can in course of time become filled with its own technological power, as the old upper class was by the weight of its wealth or blueness of its blood, and ultimately cease to speak for the masses and lose its real identity with them. Such a state of affairs we have seen is quite consistent with "equality of opportunity," for the lad from the slum may rise to a managerial post. That is, however, not the cornerstone of socialist society. It can only warn us not to be blinded by shibboleths which socialists also too often indulge in. What usually happens in a pseudo-socialist society is that an economic class is replaced by a political, or may be another economic class based on other standards and qualifications—the class rule

continuing nevertheless. We therefore work back again to the character of the technique of achievement, the steps of progress. Means are to a large extent ends, for an achievement is in its essence an experience. Therefore democratic practices have to be the way of life with every socialist, and the recognised technique of a socialist party which aims at setting up a socialist democratic state.

It is usually erroneous to lay the responsibility for the growth of totalitarian tendencies, for instance, at the door of a single man and heap upon him all the blame as in the case of Stalin. We have to look back further over his shoulders into the pre-revolution era and appraise the character of those parties who worked for the ushering in of the socialist state in Russia. Did they believe in democracy? Did they devise such instruments as would bring this principle into every operation? Were they sensitive to the flowering of personalities? Were they mindful of the deadening effect of suppression and coercion? For therein lies the key to the puzzle of Russia—there the solution to future socialist problems. Similarly in Germany, all evidence proves that totalitarian tendencies did not follow the revolution but preceded it. Both the Bolsheviks as well as the National Socialists, although differing in their historical role in setting the class alignments, had nevertheless one character in common—they were undemocratic in their practices and processes of functioning. This is indeed the crux of the whole problem, for, it determines the entire character of the order the group evolves. The two parties were not concerned with democracy; their aim was seizure of power in the quickest and most effective way. They could not be bothered by scruples over means or the negotiating of conflicts, to ensure conscious responsible action. On the wave of an upsurge, they came to power. The destruction of democracy was implicit in the totalitarian character of the parties which set no store by the ideal of collectivism; for they attached no value to individual freedom in collective action. To them all this was just so much bourgeois nonsense. They had neither the time nor the patience for such niceties. Any social set-up by such groups, can only be along totalitarian lines. Their entire

present approach and methods of execution can be traced to their original philosophy and the processes which it necessarily shaped.

It is these very experiences which urge us socialists not only to cling to but also give effect to the ideals of democracy, which should be "the distinguishing characteristic of a socialist"—for democracy must be an indivisible quality of real socialism. Pseudo-socialist forms, however, are making such a discussion necessary and are compelling socialists to be qualified as "Democratic Socialists" lest the common association in the public mind of socialism with totalitarianism sully it, at least till the public mind is dispossessed of this fallacy; as also of a naive inference that because democracy came into form with capitalism, with the decline of the latter it too must end. At the same time the historical process has to be intelligently worked out, so that all the gains of human knowledge, because of their birth under capitalism, are not destroyed only because of that, but preserved for a happier and better organised posterity.

Far from Marxism going inevitably and helplessly along the road of totalitarianism, it definitely assumed that the historical development of planned society would lead to the disappearance of the State, which is but an organised form of coercion, aided by popular convention and legal sanctions. However utopian the philosophical anarchism may seem to our practical minds, it is at least clear that Marxism did not conjure up the totalitarian dictatorship that has subsequently been set up in the name of Marxism. It definitely aimed at the discovering of conditions, particularly material, wherein the ideals of cultural and political freedom, as formulated by progressive minds and movements from time to time, could attain greater fulfilment. Orthodox Marxism, of course, believed that the economy of a culture was the decisive factor in determining its social and political character, and at any given moment this character may be predicted if one knows at the time the relationship of the various economic factors to each other. Though in the main these laboratory-like formulas may be right, human affairs cannot be oversimplified like natural or chemical elements. We have seen that more than one political form is compatible with capitalism

in the different stages of its development. It is, therefore, equally misleading to conjure up collectivist economy automatically with totalitarianism and to declare that socialism is incompatible with democracy. What faces all revolutionary reformists is the place of the individual in collective living. There is the answer to "why democracy?" Large societies, such as ours today, cannot be knit together by mere pulpit sermons of "love thy neighbour as thyself." Men may be temporarily moved by eloquence or by personal example of stray leaders, but unless they are convinced of the truth that the good of the single is indivisible from that of the whole and vice versa, it cannot be made to be translated into action. To achieve that, the will for community in one form or another must play a big part. Just as by our contact with those whom we love and who matter to us we get inspired and exhilarated—life-giving force as it is called—in a less complete form may be, it occurs in all kinds of healthy associations and arises out of mutual personal awareness, mutual enrichment and responsibility. The other is the lethal relationship in which each tries to exploit the other for one's own personal interest. Human minds have to be encouraged to be independent, free-thinking, not conditioned to a single mould to discriminate yet be tolerant; to appreciate cultural and individual differences, not as dividing hyphens but as foundations for enriched co-operative community life. Democracy like freedom is best nurtured and preserved by living it, not preaching empty slogans. Lastly there must be developed a strong tradition of mutual responsibility—responsibility of course includes kindness and consideration. Such a responsibility also means integrity, intellectual as well as social. Therefore, while the individual is made aware of his or her responsibility towards society, not merely in thought but stimulated into intelligent action, the society in turn is made equally aware of the significance of its duty towards the individual. In its practical application the question arises in planned economy. The term is itself ambiguous, for it has no intrinsic meaning of its own. The meaning it takes on is from its context. The meaning therefore shifts from one social context to another. There is as much planned economy attempted under capitalism and fascism as is

envisaged under socialism. In capitalistic economy, the purpose of planning is primarily to assure profit for the industrialists, all else is incidental ; in fascist economy, it assures power and control for the State ; in socialist society, the aim of planning is public welfare or the economic and social security of the masses. The chief components of public welfare are social efficiency and the strengthening of those rights of personality which are associated with the ideals of democracy.

The purpose of planning under democratic socialism is the achievement of efficiency, elimination of waste, and maximum service. While we may not want to encourage duplication, we certainly do not want to destroy variety. As someone has said : " Diversity, creative individuality and catholicity of tastes " should be its characteristics. The erroneous conception of planned society as a rigidly and centrally directed control must be abolished. Decentralisation has not only a place in democratic social planning, but in the view of its very purpose, very desirable ; as in the case of certain commodities and services, decentralisation would make for greater social satisfaction and efficiency. All that is necessary is to see that all such schemes have a place in the total national plans and do not lead to conflict, which would mean waste and inefficiency.

In conclusion one may confess that no specific device or any set of them, is by itself sufficient for the preservation of democracy in a planned socialist society. Generally speaking, we may ask for the guaranteeing of a few essentials, such as the freedom of individuals to choose occupations for which they can qualify ; to move freely round the country ; to be able to select from among an ample variety, goods, services, amusements, etc. ; a vested right in a job, i.e., a minimum income or annual wage which cannot be alienated once certain qualifications of skill have been met ; trade unions independent of the Government, whose function is not to stimulate production and save money for the State, but to insure the best working conditions and to protect their members from arbitrary administrative power ; an independent judiciary ; control of public services such as newspapers, radio by co-operative bodies ; and such like measures. One can't be very dogmatic

about details. Once the principle is established, ways and means can always be worked out to keep the principal content intact.

## THE CASE FOR SOCIALISM RESTATED

**T**HE close of the war left humanity physically and mentally torn from end to end ; old codes are dust, old paths faintly traceable. Every thinking individual has today to rediscover himself—more so every ideological group. Many of the familiar landmarks can guide us no more. New ones keep eluding us. There is a need for some fundamental thinking as well as for the restating of its case for the left, especially the socialists, particularly so in view of the deep impact of science on human thought and life and the far-reaching changes that this has wrought. This is not so very easy or simple a matter for unfortunately, human beings still function in isolated sectors, and life's various phases are rarely co-related and treated as an indivisible whole. The scientists therefore carry on as though there were nothing else in the world except science, while few men possessed of social sense also happen to be trained as scientists. If one takes the atom bomb as an instance, it illustrates these fateful gaps. For at least ten years before the birth of this bomb, men had been working on this dynamic energy, conscious in varying degrees of its immense implications and the vast changes it was bound to effect in the very structure and content of our existence. But no socially-conscious group actually took steps to meet the situation. At the same time the clever men of the laboratory who were letting loose the monster as though it were just a whizzing bat, never bothered about the possibilities of the aftermath that was bound to follow.

It is the role of the Socialists to analyse the import of such discoveries and of similar forces that are fast changing the face of our old life beyond recognition. It is only by an intelligent understanding that we can direct the currents of life into useful channels that humanity may benefit by it and not expose ourselves to the accidents of haphazard factors.

In restating the case the socialists have once again to reiterate that socialism is not a mere negative protest against poverty,

nor just a battle for better wages, sick pay, etc. It is not even just the massed self-interest of individual workers. It is much more the positive passion for happy human relations, a sound society in the sense of the largest number finding fulfilment and satisfaction in more than the mere self-seeking, that is in such the experiences as comradeship, striving through a disciplined act and a crusading spirit for a common cause. This is what gives the socialists both to social integrity and intellectual style.

To make this a practical experience in large societies is the task of the socialists who have turned away from the ruthless methods of totalitarianism to the gentler and more abiding technique of persuasion through reasoning and conviction and the action of comradeship through intimate experience. *Ahimsa* or non-violence as a way of life has been attempted through certain sages down the long centuries. Experiments have been made to make this ideal a living philosophy in small communities—colonies of men and women who came together, and by this ideal to illustrate it through their own life. Then Mahatma came along to practise it on a mass scale and for a time succeeded, incredible though it may seem. Even the fierce Pathan turned away his rifle and bared his chest like St. Francis, in the spirit of the crusaders. What the socialists have so passionately dreamed of is still but a dream.

Socialism is interpreted so largely in terms of economic facts and social formulas that one is almost tempted to overlook the most important factor in it—the human. Consciously or unconsciously what we all aim at is the realisation of the personality as each of us interprets or defines it. Every personal ambition is but a reaching out to it; every effort but a striving to unfold oneself, stripping off layer after layer of the extraneous matter which weighs our real being down. Whether we aspire in developing the personality fully in oneself or the society as a whole, the basic urge is the same. In a socialist that urge expands beyond one's little personal shell. Socialism makes us alive to the issue that we ought to try to be fully human—not just personal and self-centred—which implies that in the process of our own development we strive to create conditions that help others in



developing their full personalities, when alone is it possible for human beings to be really human. In the real sense it means to be fully aware of oneself and of others in terms of different needs and capacities, the differences linked by a single underlying identity which we call the sense of comradeship. It is this which enables us to appreciate the wealth in the diversity, to take delight in it, and cultivate respect for it; to co-operate wholeheartedly in all the common ventures for the common good and thereby accept responsibility for one another's well-being. To be human is to have an inexhaustible capacity to love, to be enriched by contacts and enhance the value of life's experience by wide intercourse. At the same time this involves a continued process of inward clashes between one's own little self and that larger self which ever seeks to put on wings to reach the very skies and span the mountains and oceans. One may say it is a continuous process of the effacing of the small self to develop into the larger, the community-self. Thus the individual is transmuted into an expansion and enrichment of the person.

True, the human love one feels for an individual can hardly be felt collectively for a whole community where there is a complete absence of intimacy, selectiveness and the delicacy of subtlety, all of which can only come out of a personal fusion. But one can function on the more general plane of affection. For that the entire society itself has to be manifestly organised with full respect for the personality of each of its members. It is such a society that socialism aims at.

This community has also to develop a strong sense of mutual responsibility and, last but not least, kindness in all dealings amongst the members of the community. But the last two will easily follow from the first, hence the emphasis of socialism on the need of developing the human personality fully—where this is ignored, we violate the community relationship of comradeship. It is this violation which permits us to tolerate a social system in which exploitation is an integral feature; allows society to be split into varying economic and social groups one subordinate to the other, the more privileged oppressing the less privileged until the entire society is caught up in a vicious vortex.

Economics do not function on a separate plane in splendid

isolation. They are meaningful only in terms of human affairs. When human beings are starved and deprived of essentials, the society is not concerned only in terms of loss of production, fall in incomes, higher mortality and the like. It is much more than that. What is after all the aim of life ? Not to produce for the mere sake of production or earning for earning's sake. All these are but the means to some end—human satisfaction. Man alone amongst the inhabitants of this animal kingdom, has risen over the mere physical needs and developed emotional and mental hunger for things which go beyond the creature comforts. He craves not only for a clean environment but also a beautiful one. Man counts music, colour, design, more than just utility. When he builds a house he is not content merely to raise four walls and a roof. He introduces artistic designs, motifs, touches of colour, a garden and an orchard if possible. Man has created certain subtle urges, which if not satisfied end in emotional perversions even as physical denials end in frustration. The functioning of present society leads not only to physical destruction but social deterioration by generating subversive, anti-social elements even amongst the very young. Therefore, to say that socialism is materialistic in the sense of being opposed to moral and cultural standards, is misleading and untrue. On the contrary it is far more acutely aware of their force. Socialism is therefore defined as a moral urge. Though it may not make a fetish of non-violence, it seeks to express it in a practical and effective way. It exposes capitalistic society as founded on violence and operating through violence. In fact this element of violence is one of socialism's strongest objections to the present order. It seeks to found the new order on universal co-operation and comradeship instead of on coercion as now and does not therefore recognise those unreal divisions human beings are broken up into, on religion, caste, creed, races, nationalities and a host of others. Socialism transcends all that and stands for a world community of free citizens. It means an attempt by man so to order his affairs that no one member of the community is less important than another, everyone to be an equal shareholder in all the good things of the earth ; to give full opportunity to that hunger in man to express ideas, thoughts, emotions, desires or

whatever be the name one prefers to give to that deep urge in him which keeps restlessly welling up to take shape.

Culture has with few exceptions been the product of leisure. The large masses of the people have neither the equipment nor the energy for creations of any gigantic proportions. Creative effort calls for independence, the calibre and courage that go into the making of a great artist. Talent of itself is not enough, just as a basketful of vegetables and tins of spices by themselves cannot form a delicacy. An experienced hand is as necessary as a fire and a pan to do that. Easily 75 per cent of mankind is today without the environment or the equipment necessary for creative expression. The wide worn-out section of our society is either frustrated or aggressively anti-social.

Nor is the class that frequents universities and other seats of learning, in a very much better position. For the present-day education does not treat knowledge as a scientific research in relation to a fast changing society. Rather is it treated as a static block to disturb which is taboo. Even the atom bomb is not able to shake their complacency. Therefore the revolution with which our present age is bursting has to be no less intellectual than economic or political. For most of the present-day pandits are smugly content to sink in the somnolent academic glory of past ages, to float on the dimness and confusion of ideas which are but the outmoded relics of bygone centuries. It is only when human knowledge is interpreted in terms of life as a moving stream, as social forces in revolution, can it in ultimate perspective become a live factor as related to the intellectual plane. Undoubtedly socialism will represent, for a long time to come at least, the fundamental philosophy of the coming epoch, until it too may have to give way to newer modes of thought and newer philosophies of life, and slip behind the ancient curtain of history to take its place amongst the faded monuments of human ideas. For the last word of Marxism itself is that there are no last words. However, that is yet a long way off. But it is good to bear that in mind, lest any ideology be extolled to the status of a theology and the book itself into a mystery cult to make of a living force a bogus science. That danger forever threatens and one would do well to be on one's guard not to take the shell for the kernel.

In the meanwhile, we have to hurry on with the process of superseding the semi-scientific sciences fostered by the present-day decaying bourgeois society which is obviously tottering on its last legs, which Marx himself once very aptly described as "the end of the prehistoric era in human annals." The sciences of the previous ages were comparatively slower, born of ample lassitude and leisure, and therefore more abstract and metaphysical. But in our machine age whose basic characteristics are continuous motion and dynamic potentiality, resulting in endless transformations, the philosophy has necessarily to be conversely of dialectics, not the Being of the metaphysical era but of Becoming of the explosive age. A revolutionary philosophy is dynamic not only in its analysis but in its practical application as well—which cannot only explain and analyse but also point the way to change itself. Above all it does not believe even an ideal as an end in itself. The test of the intellectual honesty is the acceptance of an end some day to every new idea rather than it become the intellectual barrier to a new reality and to further expanding knowledge. For every ideal is but the forerunner of other ideals to follow, each a symbol of its own age.

Socialism represents the first world panorama based throughout upon rigorous scientific and factual methodology. At the same time it represents the transition from the capitalistic class society to scientific world community. In its universality it works to prepare the way for new and higher intellectual revolutions, and in doing so foresees and predicts the day when fresh categories of ideologies will arise to fill the content of new and more evolved social forms. In a dialectical universe "Ends are also beginnings." In the infinite warp and web of human life, its manifestations assume varied and endless forms that change from age to age, epoch to epoch.

We seem to be passing at the moment through a long narrow crevice which someone has aptly described as rocky straits between two oceans. We have turned our back upon the more decadent sections of society—those intellectuals who betray their noble task in society in a blind zeal to maintain old forms rather than the sanctity and dignity of human life ; who have lost their sensibility to be concerned as much with the means as with the ends, so

\* pitifully forgetting that means have a way of winding up as the ends. We look today to the more vital limb of our social organism—the toiling masses whom we want this philosophy to inspire to build the new, nobler and finer civilisation, based on respect for the human individual and not his social status ; courtesy for the solidity of his character not the figures in his bank-book. Once the culture sprang from the brilliantly-lit marble mansions, today we want to woo it from the shadowy tenements, to chisel it from the rough-hewn wood and not out of mock gentility.

Socialists must reiterate their fundamental faith in the community and its final achievement ; whose members shall practise democracy, by recognising socialism as the faith of the individual in his own integrity ; work which will not be exploitation but the expression of the human spirit ; industry as a function the dignity of which is upon all members irrespective of how lowly the task—thus making of work a genuine communal expression functioning on a positive creative plane ; a society that would set direction and management into a team and make public ownership synonymous with efficient public control ; for the former without the latter would be just an empty shell ; and it is for socialists to impart to socialism the necessary qualities of democratic vitality and responsibility in the wielding of that power.

## IMPERIALISM AND CLASS-STRUGGLE\*

THE birth of the Socialist Party in the Congress marks an important epoch in Indian politics, though few perhaps have realised its significant role. People in their ignorance merely regard it as a symbol of revolt against Gandhiji and Gandhism, an indiscriminate importation of inassimilative western notions. There are some who are sympathetic, but regard its appearance as premature. All these betray a lack of historical knowledge and historical sense. The majority takes its stand on the ground that our struggle today is against a foreign power and the talk of class-war confuses the issue and gives rise to internecine fights. This shows that a great many people have not understood the

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\* Presidential Address, All-India Socialist Conference, Meerut, 1936.

nature of Imperialism or the characteristics which a struggle against it ought to develop. Unless we get a clear understanding on that, it is not possible to get a correct perspective of India's struggle or of the role of the Socialist Party in it.

Imperialism is the outcome of capitalistic production, that is, production of commodities sold at the highest profit ; hence its need for a constant expansion of market to maintain a level of prosperity. It also means export of capital from an industrialised country to undeveloped tracts, thus reaping heavy dividends. Such capital is employed, not in industrial development, for that would necessarily mean limiting the imports coming from the " Home " market. So it goes into the development of the means of transportation. And so far as the exports go, the expansion is only illusory. No real expansion is possible unless production also increases and this is not possible except through improved means of production, which again has no chance in a colonial country. So, the high rate of profit that the foreign creditor derives from investments in colonies is raised by the continuous exploitation of the masses by depriving them of even the little surplus they might otherwise have saved. Thus the heavy taxation in India represents the high interest rate paid to the foreign creditor.

Now let us examine the relationship between this Imperialism and its Indian allies, such as the princes, landlords, capitalists, middlemen, money-lenders, etc., for, then we shall have realised the class-basis of the Indian anti-Imperialist struggle. For the efficient working of Imperialism an Indian agency is indispensable, because without some such social basis it would not be possible for it to maintain its hold. The landlords, the capitalists, the middlemen in India are the creation of Imperialism. When the East India Company came in, they found a country where the old order was passing away, but trade had already become an important social factor, though the industry was of pre-capitalist mode. This was a stumbling block in the path of a free importation of cheap manufacture for which a ready market had to be created somehow. So the handicrafts were ruthlessly destroyed, throwing hundreds of thousands out of employment and abruptly converting the country into a purely agricultural one. This was also in the interest of Imperialism, for the " Home " country had

to be assured of an unlimited supply of raw material for its factories.

Left to itself the social process of evolution from semi-feudalistic society and pre-capitalistic industry would have worked itself out as in other countries. The decaying feudalistic order would have been destroyed by the rising bourgeois and industry would have passed into the capitalist mould. Instead, the foreign intervention brought in a chain of events entirely different in character. The old feudalistic absolutism was overthrown as a political power and in its place a whole lot of tax-farmers was created from among the contractors, the highest bidders being made the overlords of several villages and invested with full proprietary powers, over and above the keeping of puppet princes. They were to be the "pillars of Imperialism" in India. The pre-capitalistic form of production was also maintained as its retention as an integral part of colonial capitalism prevents the rise of mass prosperity which must necessarily bring industrialisation in its wake. Here we begin to see the link between Imperialism and this ballast of feudal conditions and why it is impossible to overcome the one without overcoming the other.

Let us now understand this semi-feudalistic condition which Imperialism maintains as its handmaid. About 75 per cent or about 260 millions of the Indian population live on agriculture. Of these nearly 12 millions live on the rents they receive as landlords or ruling chiefs, their income being estimated at nearly 180 crores. This class leads the typical parasitical existence living on an unearned income. Nor is this income spent for productive purposes. It is mostly diverted to urban areas, squandered on degenerate luxuries or spent abroad. The rural areas are left starving for finances for general improvement and the same is the fate of industries. Nearly one-third of the cultivated area is owned by this class and all this vast tract of land and the millions that toil on it are doomed to a dark gloomy existence.

The rest of the land is owned by the Government. The fate of these areas and of those who cultivate them is hardly any better, though they are formally free from feudal bondage. All agriculturists, whether they be petty land proprietors or tenants, are practically a proletarianised mass, for they do not in either

case possess the land they work upon. They are completely at the mercy of the land-owner. The living they eke out is more in the nature of wages than an independent income. In addition there is the money-lender to whom their produce is mortgaged.

The intense overcrowding on the lands due to the absence of industries to absorb the surplus population now struggling on the land, the primitive methods of production which do not give India a chance of competing in the world-market and merely making the life of the villager an unrelieved drudgery, all these are accountable for the utter pauperisation of the peasantry. This continuous exploitation, frustration of every effort, a futureless horizon, have killed the incentive in them, filling them with a despairing fatalism.

The solution of the agrarian problem is, therefore, an essential condition for India getting out of this vicious rut. It alone will lead to successful industrialisation which must necessarily lead to the general prosperity. This will relieve the pressure on the land, raise the purchasing power of the masses and give India a place in the world-market. But, to bring this about, a radical change in the social structure is essential. If antiquated modes have to be replaced by newer and more scientific ones, the feudalistic system must give place to a more just and equitable system of land tenure, the pre-capitalistic mode of production to mechanisation, then surely the overthrow of Imperialism must also mean the abolition of landlordism. This will release the peasantry from its present economic slavery and open up the land for intense cultivation by modern methods; and all the wealth which now runs into unproductive channels will be available for fostering industries. This will mean great stimulation of the general economic life of the country.

Lastly, there are the middlemen who are also partners in this Imperialistic game of exploitation. In the absence of any sound credit system, usury offers an attractive opening. In the absence of any marketing facilities the middlemen plunder the poor peasantry. Thus, under the pre-capitalistic mode of production, the middlemen have a good stake and they will not be a willing party to the abolition of this system of economy which is the inevitable prelude to normal industrialisation. Now the ques-



tion may be raised why this historic task of abolishing the feudalistic system cannot be done by the bourgeois in India as has been the case in most other countries. For the obvious reason that the Indian masses today are in reality the slaves of capitalism, for, Imperialism is the ultimate phase of capitalism, the semi-feudal conditions are maintained by Imperialism as part of its function. The Indian bourgeois is, therefore, an instrument of capitalism in the exploitation of the masses. Imperialism has buttressed itself behind the upper classes. Whenever a peasant struggles against excess rent or tax, a worker to better his condition of living, or the subjects of the native states resist the absolute powers of the princes, the Imperialist forces appear as protectors of the exploiters. Thus, when the toiling masses who form nearly 90 per cent of the population fight for complete national independence they must necessarily fight Imperialism in all its strength, that is, together with all its allies.

Indian capitalism has grown as a by-product of Imperialism and is linked up with Imperialist trade and industry. Due to its own contradictions, British Imperialism, though unwillingly, is forced to give some economic and political concessions to Indian capitalism and other upper classes to maintain themselves and allow them to grow, though the normal development is chequered. The capitalist class is more than satisfied with its condition. Its existence is, therefore, conditioned by the continuance of Imperialism, whereas by the overthrow of Imperialism its life is endangered. Under the framework of Imperialism whatever political reforms are granted, the condition of the masses cannot improve. In fact, by the new constitution or any similar reform, the alliance between Imperialism and the Indian bourgeois will be tightened, leading to greater exploitation of the toiling classes. The classes that will fight Imperialism are those whose condition will deteriorate by the presence of Imperialism. It is only those classes who have "nothing to lose but their chains and a world to gain" that will fight—and these are the workers, the peasants and the lower middle classes.

In a colonial country, class-struggle inevitably coincides with the struggle for national freedom, for the anti-Imperialist movement is also a struggle against capitalism and landlordism. The

same arguments apply to Indian conditions. The Indian capitalist will throw in his lot with the national struggle in so far as his interests conflict with those of foreign capitalism. But with the concession of facilities to improve and develop his capitalist investment in indigenous industrialism, he automatically turns into co-partnership with the very force against which he was ranged in opposition only a little while ago. Both draw upon cheap Indian labour and cheap raw material. It pays capitalism, whether white or coloured, to keep native labour at a low ebb.

The post-war chaos that capitalism had to face, induced British Imperialism to change its colonial policy. The purchasing power of the Indian peasants being at a very low par, some effort had to be made to raise the standard of living in order to stimulate trade. So, a limited scheme of industrialisation was launched upon and high tariffs set up. This meant a renewed field for investment and the sale of heavy machinery and a demand for engineering experts, all for the benefit of the foreign creditor, and the "Home" country and the Indian bourgeois, all ready instruments in working out this scheme of a more direct exploitation of the Indian masses. For this would mean larger surplus value of a big dividend to the shareholders. The Indian capitalist was to be lavishly fed on high tariffs to meet the budget deficits. But in this declining stage of capitalism its last desperate effort to reinstate itself is failing. While the prices of finished goods rise, thanks to the tariffs, the price of the raw material falls and the purchasing power of the masses goes down bringing in its wake greater chaos. The acute distress caused by this is creating a spirit of revolt in the masses which is leading to a closer union between the British and Indian capitalist. To retain this support British Imperialism is launching upon political reform, a few make-believe concessions that only mean the strengthening of the chains. For, without an appreciable expansion in the productivity of labour, the Indian capitalist can only profit by further exploitation of the Indian proletariat and that is what we are witnessing today.

The crisis created by the contradiction of Imperialism cannot be overcome unless by the termination of Imperialism. Thus alone can India save herself from destruction. Reformism cannot

find a foothold under present conditions. It has a place only under capitalist prosperity when concessions could still be wrung from it. Normal social, economic and political growth being impossible under these circumstances, because they are inherent in a colonial system, the system itself needs to be changed. The progressive undermined state of national economy means progressive contraction of the purchasing power of the masses. An expanding market is the basic condition for industrial development. And this is impossible with a declining purchasing power. Hence, even though there is plenty of labour power going waste, there cannot be industrial progress. Our internal market can expand only when the Indian peasant is spared a little of his surplus produce instead of being wiped clean by rents, taxes—direct or indirect—and usurious interest. This is not possible in the present property relations within the frame-work of Imperialism. The present state is an expression of Imperialist domination. The radical changes it needs to undergo before any appreciable benefit can be derived, cannot be effected by Indianisation of services, responsibility at the centre, or fiscal autonomy. That would only mean drawing a larger Indian element into the vortex of the Imperialist machinery and the Indian bourgeois being given a junior partnership in the business. The power will still remain in the hands of a small minority and not transferred to the people and the old game of exploitation will continue.

In order to mobilise and harness the mass energy to the anti-imperialist struggle there must be political consciousness in the masses. This is possible only through the economic fight built out of demands for a few immediate items. The economic motive is one of the strongest in the human element and it is through the economic demands that a programme that they can visualise as freedom can be built up, and out of this struggle will rise the great struggle for political power by the masses. Roughly these demands will work out as follows :—

1. Higher wages and better conditions of labour ;
2. 40 hours' week ;
3. Insurance against unemployment, sickness, old age and adequate protection for women workers during maternity ;

4. 50 per cent reduction in rent ;
5. Annulment of the indebtedness of the peasants, workers and artisans ;
6. Complete exemption of rent of uneconomic holdings ;
7. Control of usury ;
8. Abolition of all indirect taxes ;
9. Free and compulsory primary education ; and
10. Freedom of press, platform and association.

In the course of their struggle for these concessions they will learn by experience that even the few crumbs have ceased to fall from the Imperialist table, and the solution as well as the salvation lies in a radical change of the entire system. And the struggle on their immediate demands will develop into the struggle for political power. It is after the realisation of this struggle that the National Constituent Assembly comes into being. We thus find that the composition of the Constituent Assembly is determined by the class-basis of the national movement and the constitution by the social composition of the Constituent Assembly. The talk of convoking it at this stage with the sanction of Imperialism is sheer delusion. It would be anything but a Constituent Assembly. In fact, it will be a positive danger, for under the name of Constituent Assembly, a puppet of Imperialism will come into being to lead to further strengthening of its domination. Moreover, it will lack both the mass sanction and composition. An analysis of the nature and function of Imperialism and the anti-imperialist struggle, the reasons for the rise of the Socialist Party, answer themselves. The Indian struggle is unique in its own way. Historically, it ought to be democratic, but in view of the world-conditions, the decaying condition of capitalism and the class-basis of the entire structure, it assumes the features of a socialistic struggle.

It is stupid for people to imagine that class-struggle is a creation of the socialists. Class-struggle is a historical fact. It has existed from the time primitive communist society ceased to be. One may ban the use of the term " Class-struggle " as the word " Sex " was tabooed in the nineteenth century. But from merely abstaining from mentioning a fact, the fact does not cease to be. As long

as the means of production remain in the hands of the few, labour remains a commodity for exchange which the owner of the productive machinery converts into huge profits for himself, as under capitalism and feudalism. Under modern capitalism production is socialised. Labour is collectively performed and is an indivisible unit. But the means of this production—land, factories, mines, railways, banks, ships, etc.—are owned by a mere handful who have nothing to do with actual production. The minimum human requirements are not satisfied ; millions starve, hence the obvious conflicts between the two classes, owners and the toilers. This contradiction can be overcome only when collective ownership of the means of production is established, that is, when the producers also become the owners of the means of production.

In conclusion, I wish to impress upon you the necessity of rallying round the Congress and making it the chief organ of the anti-imperialist struggle. There are historical reasons why the Congress should be the real anti-imperialist platform. Ever since 1921, it is the only organisation which has been fighting Imperialism. No doubt, the leadership is either bourgeois or the people who have the bourgeois ideology. It represents, however, the objective strivings of the masses, that is, freedom from foreign domination, and the politically conscious people are in the Congress. The content of the Congress is not bourgeois. Therefore to create any petty-bourgeois anti-imperialist platform outside the Congress and to try to duplicate it would be wrong. It will become the sham replica of a Working Class Party and cannot embrace the entire petty-bourgeois anti-imperialists. All class-conscious working-class elements and the true anti-imperialists, rather than running away from the Congress, calling it bourgeois, should in fact enter it and clarify the issue of the masses, placing before them the correct programme so that the class differentiation that is taking place in the country may be reflected inside the Congress. Then alone shall we be able to capture the Congress movement and prevent the leadership from converting it into a bourgeois party thus stealing from us the Congress heritage.

## JAWAHARLAL NEHRU

JAWAHARLAL is probably the most romantic figure the Indian political world has produced. To be born with the proverbial silver spoon in the mouth and yet to be the most indefatigable enemy of vested interests, cannot but capture one's imagination. All the good fairies of luck must have presided at his birth to lavish on him most extravagantly their choicest gifts. He lacks nothing, not even perennial youthfulness, a quality so rare in this country of ours.

A childhood spent in the gorgeous Anand Bhavan whose splendours have dazzled every visitor, an English public-school education and the high-brow Cambridge University to round off with, he has had the most envied and coveted of opportunities at easy call. Rare though such circumstances may be, they are not exceptional. But it is not everyone who plays on the Eton grounds or wears the colours of Harrow or walks the historic halls of Cambridge or lisps the Oxford accent that becomes a Jawaharlal. More than one contemporary of his at college has remarked, "We always felt he would become somebody. There was something exceptional about him."

It is the misfortune of many a worthy child to be eclipsed by its parent should that parent but happen to be a strong individual. But Jawaharlal is a marked exception. In spite of the towering personality of Pandit Motilal, Jawaharlal has carved out a special place for himself in the world and has impressed it with his own individual stamp. Adored by the father, worshipped by the mother, he defied all tradition and remained unspoilt. Superficial critics might say that he owes half his glory to his father, his birth and his home. But one has only to know him and review his life even cursorily, to feel that minus all these great assets there were equal chances for him still to become the Jawahar he is—the finest jewel of India, most beloved of all youths and rivalled but by one as the greatest leader of the country.

In build he is not as towering as the atmosphere around him

gives one the impression. The first consciousness one has is of strength, indomitable, almost overpowering. The air of aloofness, the aggressive and challenging manner, do not put one at one's ease at first. At times the head is raised and thrown back with almost a haughty air that makes one feel either very small or resentful. But it is not long before these unpalatable sensations are dispelled. Before you realise it you know that you have surrendered to that impregnable rock that you may have had every intention of first attacking. You may agree with him or you may not, but you cannot ignore him.

His sincerity is transparent, his frankness almost hurtful ; not even his enemy doubts the genuineness of his purpose. With his youthful spirit, his daring imagination, his fiery ardour, his fearless originality, he has painted the dull, drab political sky with brilliant colours. Like Shelley among poets, he stands unique among politicians. The far-away look in his eyes speaks of hidden dreams. Once that deep-set mouth must have broken into smiles oftener ; those firm lips melted into softer lines ; the stern eyes danced with a more tender light. Those delicately shaped hands, the exquisitely chiselled feet, all so eloquent of a dream-laden soul, are today masked by the hard relentless marks of terrible struggle, which he so characteristically embodies in himself as the representative of a nation in the throes of a fierce battle.

This note of sincerity is but a tribute to his integrity and singleness of purpose. There are some who take their task and responsibility easy. We are not even wanting in leaders to whom it is almost an amusing game. But to Jawaharlal it has a grim seriousness. One cannot help wishing sometimes that he were a little less serious. There seems to be no room in his life for anything else. There is something almost terrifying in that intense concentration of all life-force and energy into one unrelieving objective. It tempts one to want to seduce him into other interests, into softer moods, see that mouth relax and the eyes shade off into a milder light. For when the transformation does come, one is gripped by its beauty and wonder. It is like a rainbow breaking through a heavy sky.

It has been perhaps the rare privilege of a few to see the human

side of Jawaharlal. To see him become a child crawling on all fours to play the comrade to a baby ; join in an excited game of hide and seek with youngsters ; carry a kid on his back marching at the head of a troop of children in a make-believe procession. To see all this is to glimpse an entirely new being, perhaps to see the real Jawahar with the mask off. Most of us regard great men as institutions. We gaze at them as we would at a shop window, catch a few transitory flashes and then pass on. The real man within remains hidden, unknown to us. To know an individual one has to know his human side ; read the unspoken thoughts, gauge the hidden depths of emotions, trace the trembling dreams stir into life, mark the character of unguarded movements, see him in the common walks of life. It is this background that reveals the real man, not the resplendent canopy of a presidential " gadi."

Jawaharlal has not only made but created history. There are many who can weave or mould images out of existing material at hand, but few who can breathe life-force into those forms and animate them into swift action. He has both the revolutionary vision and the revolutionising energy, that iconoclastic touch which like a powerful steel hammer destroys the antediluvian forms with masterly strokes. But the creator in him is supreme as in every true revolutionary. Everything he does has an originality about it, whether it be presiding over a conference or penning a newspaper article. Who has not had his traditional sensibilities outraged seeing him jump from the dignified presidential seat and rush to a corner of the pandal to still a disturbance or leap from the imposing processional car to mount a bicycle and ride through a surging crowd of worshipful spectators in order to clear the way ? Such cases would ordinarily strike us as fantastically melodramatic, but in him the severest critic could not fail to be struck by an irrepressible spontaneity of unconsciousness which is as disarming as it is refreshing, if somewhat histrionic.

With the single exception of Gandhiji nobody has influenced political thought and action as radically and in so big a way as Jawaharlal. He is too near us yet for us to evaluate fully his contribution to India. There are two things, however, that stand



out as supreme : his shaping the objective of our national struggle into the ideal of complete independence and his attempt to give a Socialist orientation to the political movement. His sojourn in Europe in 1926-27 had perhaps brought home to him the exact nature of the innumerable tentacles of imperialism that have their grip over India. His reappearance at the Madras Congress, his triumphant victory for his Independence resolution in spite of Gandhiji's avowed opposition, gave India and the political struggle a new character and strength. Two years later at the historic Congress at Lahore, the foundation of the new militant movement that was to rejuvenate and exhilarate India was laid, his old dream was fully realised, for even Gandhiji and the other sober-minded people joined in the Independence festivities.

The Fundamental Rights Resolution, now almost the Magna Carta of India, though a far cry from Socialism, yet reflects a new mood and marks another new departure in the Congress policy. Though the Socialist elements had already sprung into birth and were consolidating themselves before his release in 1933, his vigorous articles "Whither India ?" served to focus public attention on the nature of freedom in terms of power to the masses, and clarify the issues which during the decline of the Civil Disobedience movement and the accompanying depression, had tended to be clouded over.

Great though he undoubtedly is and justly proud of the consciousness of his own strength, he has never considered himself too big to bow before one whom he along with his country accepted as the leader. His exemplary loyalty and his unwavering allegiance to this leader has never ceased to puzzle the world. Two individuals so unlike in temperament, so divergent in their outlook and yet so close in harness, so intimate in comradeship, have perhaps few parallels. Gandhiji paid him the highest tribute that he could pay to anyone when he said "Jawaharlal is as pure as crystal." In that blinding crystalline whiteness are marked all the delicate opalescent tints, all the alluring sparks that are hidden in every flame. He who can gaze into the heart of this crystal without being stung by its sharp light-arrows can catch swift glimpses of that coloured world and know that the fiery armour hides a soft melting being, very human and

very lovable, but who, perhaps, afraid of his own humaneness and tenderness and the wistful ache of gentler emotions, hurriedly covers them up even from his own gaze.

His is not a meteoric glory ; he did not win his laurels on the smooth floor of the Legislature nor make his mark reclining amongst the soft cushions of Anand Bhawan. He is the tried soldier who literally carries battle scars on his body. He has had his baptism of the lathi, initiation into the ritual of iron manacles on the wrist, repeated retreats behind prison cloisters. Perhaps few among the leaders have been tried in so scarlet and fiery a flame as he has been. He came out of prison in 1931 to bid a last cruel farewell to his father. He has sometimes humorously remarked when people in hushed voice and with awe-stricken face have asked him if he was really at school with the Prince of Wales, that "perhaps he owed some of his popularity to this legend." But what matters to those thousands of villagers who flock to see him, keeping a weary vigil through a freezing night on station platforms if only to catch a glimpse of the train which carries him—for most often they see nothing more than the blinding orange glare of the engine light or the vanishing red flare of the rear carriage. No, they honour and love him because they know they have a friend in him ; one, who feels and suffers with them ; who knows the darkness of their distress, the terror of their empty lives, the unrelieving monotony of their existence, the cruel sharpness of their vast hunger ; one who has grieved with them over their shattered hopes and trudged the lonely road with the homeless, one who counts no cost too great to bring a little light to their gloomy homes, a little joy into their shadowy hearts and a little dignity into their oppressed lives.

### SAROJINI NAIDU

“THERE is something of oriental magic about Sarojini Naidu. Born at another period in Indian history, she would have been more concerned with her exquisite and delicately perfumed verses than with the rough and tumble of politics. In the India of

today, so gifted and sensitive a personality, feeling acutely her country's humiliation under foreign rule, could not possibly take to the ivory tower." In these words Yusuf Meherally defines Sarojini's personality in his sketch of her.

In a way she eludes definition—she is so many things and in so many ways. She is all things to all people. That is her uniqueness, given, indeed, to few. So it would be not only foolhardy, but stupid to label her.

For by labelling a person, the emphasis is shifted from the whole human personality to a single attribute in that person. With Sarojini her humaneness towers over everything else. It is not unusual to find the creation of a person more impressive than the person that created it. At times the personality of the creator is even disillusioning. But with Sarojini her personality reflects more truly the whole of her than does any single one of her gifts, qualities or expressions. Lovely as are her lyrics, she is herself as rich, nay richer than them, for she is more many-sided than her poems. Similarly, commanding as her oratory may be, her personality is still more compelling than her power of speech. Therefore, to assess and appreciate her, it is not enough to read her verses or hear her speak, one has to contact her in person. And here again one has to know her in her myriad moods, posed in various angles and lights and shades, for her sensitive nature makes her differently responsive to countless things, wide apart and diverse in character. For she is an amazingly versatile person. With her it is not so much the acquisition of details or factual incidents as a rare knack for getting at the core of a subject and, having done so, weave the substance round it, as a poet weaves magical imagery around a theme. It is this ability in her to get her teeth right into the kernel which gives her a boundless vision and universal sympathies, makes her cosmopolitan in taste and tolerant in feeling, gives her the capacity to be so many different things to so many different people. She is entirely free from bigoted sectionalism. She can be quite at home almost anywhere, in any surroundings, in any company. Free from self-consciousness and preoccupation with herself, she gives unreservedly and

unstintedly of herself. She is one of those rare beings who is never defeated or frustrated in the most trying circumstances or damping atmosphere. For she seems to possess within herself an eternal spring of buoyancy that she can draw upon when her objective surroundings fail her. Nay, so infectious are her good spirits that they would almost draw a ripple from a dumb stone. She has also the rare capacity to be able to indulge with equal ease in small talk as in high-brow conversation. She will listen with equal relish to inane remarks on the weather, conventional remarks on the season's parties or the local bride's trousseau, smart talk on the fortunes of the race-course, and cattish scandals, as to learned discourses on the latest book of poetry or the qualities of a rising artist. That is the real secret of her social success and popularity. There are many with the gift of the tongue or flashes of the brain, but they can shine either in a superficial drawing-room society set, or in the exclusive intellectual conclave. It is given to few to shine in both and Sarojini happens to be one of them.

Sarojini is therefore the universal Akka—elder sister—whom all proudly and affectionately claim through this simple ancient epithet that hoary tradition and generations of associations have made into as noble and living a term as Ma—one to whom they can go with their domestic problems, hunt for jobs, communal tangles and the kind, and be sure of a kindly and ready help. And she is always there—that too is a rare quality. For many may be physically there but not mentally, not so Sarojini. She is always ready to listen, to give her time, her attention. It is easy enough to rouse interest but to sustain it is no mean job. But with Sarojini she takes the problem to her heart and sort of makes it her own—that is one of her typical characteristics. Possibly, it is this passionate interest in human beings and affairs that has cultivated such a prodigious memory in her. One cannot define it in any other way. Some remember faces, others names, while the rest have only a lingering sense of associations. Not so with Sarojini. She remembers faces, names (not merely of an individual but the whole bunch of the individual's family members) and all the associations formed around these individuals. This,

again, must necessarily add to her popularity and likeability. For nothing flatters people so much as celebrities recognising their faces and even remembering their names. But they are completely overwhelmed when they find that their whole family and all the personal associations formed around them are so freshly green in the big leader's mind. It lends them a sense of added interest in their own eyes, which is but human. Thus Sarojini being very human herself is able to draw out the human in everyone she comes into contact with.

Sarojini is a big person, not merely generous. Although she has been used to a lot of physical comfort and needs it partly because of her poor health, she is not petty enough to be a slave to it. Sarojini loves the good things of life, but without making a fetish of them. When she was incarcerated and deprived of many of these comforts she was used to, she was never known to have demanded them or sulked for not being able to have them. To her they were genuinely too insignificant as to dominate her. They were on the contrary subject to her command. Thus, while others who could have surmounted these hardships with greater ease sulked or stormed, she barely shrugged her shoulders.

We may thus assume that those who succeed in rising above the physical details of their surroundings rather dominate their environment. To one like Sarojini who has such a zest for the good things of life, incarceration should be a genuine hardship. But those who have shared it with her have never once found her in low spirits, never once at a loss how to kill time, never once sighing for what could be and is not. Such uniform cheerfulness is indeed almost astounding.

Yet Sarojini is extremely responsive to environment, and the more human it is the quicker and the livelier her reaction. In fact it would be no exaggeration to say that the whole of her functions only when the human factors in her surroundings are stimulated. That neither this stimulation nor her own responses are superficial is amply borne out by practical experience. In fact her retention of so many personal details is proof enough of that. She has the unique habit of giving permanency to these links by remembering to send greetings to hosts of people all

over the country that she has come into contact with, on their birthdays, at festivals, on happy and sad occasions—a perfectly staggering job to say the least, for a universally popular person like herself. It is also one of the factors that make her so big and so lovable. There are many leaders who are respected and looked up to, but few like Sarojini with whom one has warm personal links, and it is the small personal details that fill and make life full and rich and worth while as it flows along the little canal of everyday routine.

It is said that accident made her alive to her own gifts of poetry, that while she was trying to solve a rather obtuse algebra problem, she scribbled a few lines of verse instead, and lo ! there was born the poetess Sarojini. At least so some of her biographers describe it. It is rather naive and a little too simple. If it was an accident, it was no doubt a very happy one, for the lyrics that resulted from it are some of the loveliest. One may, indeed, speculate endlessly on what might have been, in so far as Sarojini and her poetry go, had she been born in a free country and the call of politics had not claimed her. To me the two have no relevancy. Those who are poets continue to be poets, first and last, whether they be lying on cushioned divans or in the trenches dreaming in a flower-lit garden or languishing in the enemy's dungeons. Poets soaring high in their monstrous bombers composed soft lilting verses. Resistance movements underground threw up masses of poetry. If Sarojini has stopped composing verses, she has certainly not ceased being a poetess. That same spirit comes out in all her actions and expressions. Lord Selborne, Chairman of the Joint Parliamentary Committee in 1918-19, is said to have remarked after her evidence before the Committee Members : "Madame, we are grateful for the poetic touch you have brought to our prosaic proceedings." Well may one echo that and realise how that element in her is neither deflected or suppressed, but finds its flow in all her moods and passions, her faithful championing of the noble cause of freedom and her ungrudging sacrifices for that cause. Her almost scintillating vivacity, her now proverbial sense of humour, her easy sportsmanship, are, indeed, eloquent tributes to the soul of the poet in her. When

man transcends himself, those brief moments are his poetry. "Moments of the soul," they may be called. When Sarojini sat on the scorching pathway to the salt-pans of Dharasana leading with a brave determination a band of fighters, she was making poetry, for those were her moments of the soul.

### KASTURBA GANDHI \*

**T**ODAY we commemorate the memory of Kasturba Gandhi—More perhaps than any other leader she embodies for us a symbol, the symbol of supreme sacrifice. Again and again it has been stressed that her life was a beautiful poem in self-effacement. But that hardly defines her role, nay, it rather distorts a life of so positive a nature, that it would be no exaggeration to say it has left its deep impress on our entire national existence. The tributes paid to her at the time of her death described her as the greatest sacrifice made by India to the moloch of British imperialism—the sacrifice not contained in a frail worn-out little body, but what Kasturba had always stood for in our minds. So we mourn today not for a woman but for what she signifies to us, and it is this which immortalises her in the shrine of India's battle glory.

What she signifies is not just a simple quality or trait, it is something complex, something which calls forth from us a heavy mixture of emotions, something that moves the million throbbings of our hearts, something that commands homage from our hearts and respect from our minds. When she died they called her sati, and it brought before us the picture of a strong proud woman who willingly offered her all—her very life on the altar of an ideal.

Yet Kasturba was entirely free from heroics, from the least taint of self-consciousness. That was her greatness. Minoo Masani's summing up of her is touchingly significant. "Kasturba's outstanding qualities were not of greatness but goodness. The world is full of clever, intelligent, brilliant men, each great in his own way, but it lacks its fair share of the goodness that

should accompany these qualities. Hence our plight. The nation-wide tribute paid to Kasturba in the past few days has significance in that it represents in a way the triumph of goodness over mere greatness." How often are we not filled with disillusionment when we come into close touch with great leaders to find them petty, mean, small-minded, notwithstanding their other big qualities and endless sacrifices. Not so with Kasturba. There was nothing about her which publicity hawkers could call great, as Masani has aptly admitted. She was nevertheless a great woman, may be because she was just herself. She neither aped nor pretended to be anything else. Her entire life was one long chain of sacrifices, not because she consciously idealised sacrifice or revelled in making herself into a heroine. One would hardly think she was even conscious of the nature of her efforts or her achievements—some accident had tied her to a man who in the course of mapping out the course of his own life, created for her an unusual setting which she had little power to change, but power enough to influence. It was in her reaction to this setting that she revealed her personality and in the process left her indelible mark on the shaping of her country's destiny.

She took a grip on its handle not as a conscious leader or even with a desire to shape its fate, but because of an innate strength within her which could not let her remain a passive spectator but had to bring her as a positive force into the vortex of the national churning. She entered the battle arena of her own will and choice. But unlike the wives of many other leaders probably better equipped from an intellectual standard and who yet hung back, she took it all in an easy and natural stride—for she had her own standards to which she strictly adhered. In her mind they had no relationship to what the world thought of them or even how it reacted to them. She did not set up for herself high destinies or aspire to mould the world. She was content to live up to the ideals she had had set before her ever since she was a child. She had been taught to be a good and dutiful wife and impressed with the idea that the fulfilment of her life lay in faithfully serving her husband. Those who impressed that on her little dreamed what that would demand of her, for life offered her not a mere man, not even a conventional mahatma for a



husband. He who held her with his one hand, held the ages with his other. He belonged not to the little orbit of her wifely existence, nor even to India ; he belonged to the world and for all time.

But unlike so many of her kind, she was neither overpowered nor yet submerged under this mighty avalanche, under which sterner natures than hers have bent. That was the test of her strength, that she could be part of that mighty force yet keep her individuality intact and be able to hand down to posterity not a mere legend but a living experience. For in her are revealed for us those legendary figures who have enriched our tradition and culture by their mighty deeds, almost miraculous as measured by our mere human minds ; women who braved the terrors of the jungles, the horrors of battlefields, who grappled with death itself triumphantly to snatch the husband's life away from the fatal noose.

The world at large has no narrative from either her pen or even her lips of these tribulations and triumphs. The few glimpses that we get have come through her husband and life-long companion. It is a pity in a way, for no matter how dispassionately he might have tried to relate their story, it is *his* story, *his* life and it is only occasionally that we glimpse her by herself. It is always his problem with her that we read of and expect for his many tender references to her, marred on a few occasions by his impatience and desperate irritation at her not being able to adopt completely his standards, we have to be content to read between the lines.

As Gandhiji himself confesses : " We were of the same age, but I took no time in assuming the authority of a husband. . . . I was a jealous husband. Her duty to me was easily converted into my right to exact faithfulness from her." The few who had occasion to come into contact with her, alone can testify to those hard grains in her character that made her and her husband what they are. It is obvious from Gandhiji's faithful narration, that she was no slave of his nor was hers an inane mind that just accepted what he chose to give her. As her husband testifies : " I must needs keep an eye on her movements, therefore she could not go anywhere without my permission. . . . To her the

restraint was virtually imprisonment and Kasturba was not the girl to brook any such thing. She made it a point to go out whenever and wherever she liked. More restraint resulted in more liberty being taken by her. . . ." With his purposeful nature he followed whatever his pursuit may have been at the time, experiments with diet, trials with medical treatment or adventures in satyagraha, with all the fervency and ardour at his command and he naturally expected his wife to fall into line with him ; for to him naturally his standards were the only proper and desirable ones. So he told her what he himself believed, that his severities were based on love. " My ambition was to make her live a pure life, learn what I learnt and identify her life with mine," which was in truth the keynote of their relationship.

Out of the anguish of that realisation came his grand confession. " We have had numerous bickerings, but the end has always been peace between us. The wife with her matchless power of endurance has always been the victor." Nor was this revelation a mere pretty sentiment. For this man of torrential feelings which could move the world itself, admits with a sweet and touching simplicity : " My passion was all centred on one woman and I wanted it to be reciprocated. I must say I was passionately fond of her. . . . I was anxious to teach her but lustful love left me no time." To him her reciprocity could only be measured in her acquiescence to his plans, his ideas and his way of life.

She had very much of a mind of her own which she preserved to the last. She merely adjusted herself to the demands of her duty, not because she was weaker than him, but firstly, because she weighed him in her own scales and convinced herself of his bona fides ; secondly, once that was established it became her rightful duty to serve him faithfully. Her's was not a blind obedience, it was an intelligent recognition of his great role and his place in a noble cause. She realised that her duty was to strengthen, fortify and inspire him by understanding, service, devotion and steadfast loyalty. But had he fallen beneath her standards, had she been convinced that what he did was wrong, we may be sure that however faithfully she might have administered to his needs, she would have refrained from aiding him

in his actions. Her loyalty was a discriminating one which places her above the average wife. She revealed this conviction when discussing the differences between them that had sometimes led to clashes : " Bapu is a great man. He admits his mistakes," she once remarked. " But he has never done me an injustice." There is a world of revelation in that appraisal of him. To us his imposition of his standards on her, especially in the early years of their marriage, may seem a hardship. But we must also realise at the same time that she resisted where she was not convinced. For instance, her reluctance to clean the chamberpot of the Panchama clerk in Durban and Gandhiji's insistence that she either do it or he do it, was one of such numerous instances. When he said that he would not tolerate any such nonsense in his house, she retorted, " Keep your house to yourself and let me go. . . . Being your wife, you think I must put up with your cuffs and kicks . . . for Heaven's sake behave yourself. . . ."

On another occasion Gandhiji was insisting on her parting with some jewels which she was saving up for her future daughters-in-law, as all doting mothers do. When he reminded her that the jewels had been given to *him* for *his* professional services, she hit back : " I agree," she retorted, " but service rendered by you is as good as rendered by me. I have toiled and moiled for you day and night. Is that no service ? You forced all and sundry on me, making me weep bitter tears, and I slaved for them." He carried his point, but he admits that the thrusts went home. In her own simple candour, in these words she reveals to us her mighty destiny and her invaluable contribution to the cause of humanity. In serving him faithfully and in perfecting that precious instrument, she was serving a larger world.

This great truth had slowly but forcefully been dawning on her through the trials of her daily experiences. When the Satyagraha ashram was started at Sabarmati, Kasturba was among those who were not ready to admit Harijans, for fear the ashram might be specially boycotted by the society. When Gandhiji failed to convince his wife, he fell back on his usual prop—fast. For seven long days the two spirits tussled, each trying to melt the other. But by the end of this ordeal, it had begun to dawn on her perceptible mind that behind this little drama lay

Gandhiji's whole philosophy of conduct, that the ashram also included these principles—that this truth was irrevocable. Gandhiji bears testimony to this great experience when he sums up his life with her : " She was simple, independent, persevering, and with me reticent. . . . Willingly or unwillingly, consciously or unconsciously, she has considered herself blessed in following in my footsteps, and has never stood in the way of my endeavour to lead a life of restraint. Though there is a wide difference between us intellectually, I have always had the feeling that ours is a life of contentment, happiness and progress."

Perhaps one of the factors which sustained her independence and to which Gandhiji has paid his homage even as he resisted it in the early days, was her complete freedom from any sense of inferiority. She was neither overpowered by his personality nor overcome by his unbending obstinacy. It was this which also gave her a stature that so many have testified to. " She is a great lady in whom is vested all that India prizes most—her gifts to the nation have been no less than her husband's." So says a writer who knew her in Sevagram. " She (Kasturba) was busy and content as though she were a mere modest housewife and not the world-famed heroine of a hundred noble sufferings in a nation's cause," says another. " Little is heard of her, little is written of her ; but the life at Sevagram has flowed round her," says a third. Her husband too admits that she was not " impatient of her ignorance," ignorance in the sense of lack of a regular education. That is why she could rise so spontaneously to an occasion, as when all on her own, deeply resentful that her husband had not invited her to join the satyagraha, she plunged into the South African movement ; or when she volunteered for educational work in the villages during the Champaran Satyagraha ; or when more than once she courageously stepped into the breach created by her husband's lightning arrests—the last occasion being the very memorable 9th August, when true to her dharma, her never-failing sense of duty to a great husband and the even greater cause that he had espoused, she courageously took up the gauntlet and announced her intention to address the meeting her husband was to have but could not. She was more than ailing at the time. She was fast fading away. Those who

saw her on that evening, when the police officers impressed upon her that if she persisted in her determination, she would have to submit to immediate arrest, knew when those firm lips pressed into an emphatic "yes" and she was bundled into the police car, that this would be her last journey. It was written all over her face. But to her there was no turning back.

At the tender age of eleven, inscrutable fate had set this course for her—which she twenty-five years later with her own determined hands steered on to that first long epic voyage of Satyagraha in South Africa. Six weary years of struggle in that dark continent when illness and privation took her to death's door—followed by what must have seemed like an interminable passage of storm and strife in India, showed her true mettle as a tireless worker and indefatigable fighter, keeping long vigils through the fiery ordeals of her husband's fasts—an epic life-record before which many sterner spirits might easily quail. With equal resourcefulness had she carried the mantle of leadership scouring the remote arid villages, bringing solace to the weary peasants. This tortuous journey had brought her today thirty-two years later to her final destiny. We know that she had no regret in her heart. Just before she breathed her last, she said: "I must go some day, why not today?" "Never did her articulation sound clearer, never were her words choicer." So says her son Devadas, describing that last scene when "with this remark and other tender words she tore herself away."

Gandhiji, commenting on her part in the political struggle, has revealed that "when she joined the struggle in South Africa or in India, it was of her own inner promptings. . . ."

What would Gandhiji's life have been had she been another Xantippe, the irate wife of Socrates, who, not content with shouting angry abuses at her incorrigible husband, would even pour a bucketful of water over his head; or the Countess Sophia Tolstoy who embittered her domestic life by her unwillingness to adapt herself. Kasturba may have had as little choice as Sophia Tolstoy had but she had abundant faith. As she once told some Bardoli peasants when they complained against Gandhiji: "Bapu does everything for the good of the people. He is sure to do you good."

She was not innately unworldly, nor would she, left to herself,

see any special virtue in renunciation. She was natural and completely free from inhibitions. As she was called upon to give up one thing after another, it is obvious that it did not always come naturally nor at times even easily to her ; but unlike her counterpart Countess Tolstoy, she did not cling to them and plague the husband's life. She was too sincere and too big a woman to serve herself under the camouflage of serving the husband, no matter what the cost. How heavy was the task Gandhiji himself reveals : " I was a cruelly kind husband. I regarded myself as her teacher and so harassed her out of my blind love for her.

" Today I am no more an infatuated husband. I am no more my wife's teacher. Kasturba can if she will, be unpleasant to me today, as I used to be to her before. We are tried friends . . . She has been a faithful nurse throughout, serving without any thought of reward." No greater tribute can one pay to her today than to echo these sweet words ; she served in her own way, not only the cause of 400 millions of India, but of all humanity without any thought of reward.

## INDIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT\*

**I**NDIAN political development is entering a new phase. In some respects the changes run to the usual pattern of history of every colonial struggle, in some respects the trends are also peculiar to India.

The last quarter of a century may well be called the Gandhian Era in so far as it was led and dominated by the personality of Gandhiji. His entry into the Indian political arena served to initiate a new era for our political existence. The Congress was torn from its old moorings of appeals and protests and launched into the current of direct action. The Congress from now on became an organ of fight. Simultaneously to give reality and meaning to this change the Congress broadened its composition by widening its base. For the first time the common man came into the political picture. The long forgotten peasant in the remote village became somebody who mattered, a potential factor

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\* From the Address at the Socialist Conference at Gadag, Karnatak, June 1946.

in the concept of freedom. The weary labourer discovered he had something of value to contribute ; every man and woman who had so far drifted down the running tide of life now found a vital role to play which made their life meaningful. Slowly but surely their dormant bosoms heaved with unexpressed dreams and hopes as the vision of a better life began to unfold before them. Slowly these vague stirrings started taking shape, dimly yet forcefully, as they began their march to a goal which was illusive as a mirage but irresistible as a magnet nevertheless. The revolution in India began and it would not be inappropriate to say that Gandhiji was the father of it for it was his hand that initiated it. He sowed the seeds of political awakening in the masses. He shaped for them the first weapon of organised direct action.

These twenty-five years have been a continuous interplay of storm and calm, intense activity and slackness. Each period of direct action involving a challenge to authority and defiance of its sanctions served to help the Congress dig deeper into the soil and extend its frontiers. Its composition had been going through ceaseless change, its character being moulded and transformed almost from day to day.

The outbreak of war naturally sharpened the anti-imperialist struggles all the world over, bringing into clear relief the monstrous character of imperialist rivalries and their inevitable results in world wars, with all their attendant horrors and human miseries. The internal contradictions of this system also deepened. India was made a party in this world devastation without her consent ; her resources mercilessly looted leaving in its wake hunger and death. Against this background came the struggle of 1942, swung round the slogan of " Quit India ". The watchword was ' Do or Die.' The masses of India rose even as a heavy elephant struggles to its feet driven by a desperate rage, after a long slumber. The elephant slashed out, its fury fully roused. The authoritarian power hit back with all the military power at its command. Brute force prevailed, but only for the time. " Quit India " had passed into the very breath of the people. They had now to give it shape or perish in the effort ; it was now ' Do or Die ' for evermore. There was no turning back or even

resting on the oars.

The 1942 struggle differed in many respects from the previous fights. It was no more a pressure movement. The people had moved unerringly forward, guided by almost an elemental feeling, towards seizure of power. Parallel instruments of authority sprang up and little islands of freedom began to appear in this sea of slavery. Such a process may be only temporarily suppressed, never destroyed. It is now moving to its final fruition.

New forces like mighty tributaries, have joined this mighty flood. The armed forces, the I.N.A., and the ordinary Indian Army, Navy and Air Force, though still technically linked to the British Military machine, yet psychologically and emotionally bound to the Indian Independence struggle. These have been decisive developments and one of the consequences of 1942; for in the last analysis it is the armed forces that help to decide the fate of every struggle. One military arm deserted by the British Army Command was resurrected under the powerful leadership of Netaji Subash Bose who dared to launch an offensive on the ruling power in this country, ill-equipped as it was, and actually planted the flag of free India within its frontiers in the first flush of its almost fanatical drive. The other military arm, the "Loyal Indian Forces," so patted on the back in the Press and on the screen but kicked around in the barracks and the establishments, had learnt at last the true meaning of loyalty and adherence to a more real freedom. Then there are also other factors that converge on this fast-moving situation.

The British Imperial edifice is fast crumbling under assaults from within and without. All Asia is in ferment and the colonial people are making one supreme effort to throw off the old yoke. Its internal economy has cracked and unless Britain can increase her exports 50 to 75 per cent above the pre-war level, England faces a grim situation. The old iron rod can work no more, for the people of India as of Egypt or Palestine face bullets with a scornful laugh. The armed forces are in revolt. This is sounding the death knell for the Empire. So, the tactics have to change. Diplomacy, subtle and sharp as a clever game of chess must replace the old big stick. So, Cabinet missions are winging the Empire. One such was in our midst not so long ago. The



Empire must be made to survive but its complexion must be changed ; for Britain cannot afford completely to lose India which is the very core of the Imperial edifice. The reactionary factors of every country form the backbone of imperialist rule. So, unless British economy were drastically altered, England would never be able to survive such a shock. All the reactionary forces in India, driven by their own selfish interests, are today trying to strengthen the hands of Britain and weaken those of the Congress, to stall the logical process of democracy and of the ultimate struggle for the seizure of power by the people of this land.

The defects and drawbacks in the British proposals have been ably set out by the Congress Working Committee even while accepting them, amplified by the Socialist leader Jai Prakash Narain and do not need repetition. One or two significant factors, however, need to be stressed for they are of vital importance to us. The logical end of their acceptance must result in Pakistan of some sort or another, inevitable ; then the transfer of power as envisaged under this formula is definitely weighted in favour of its being vested in the hands of an authority dominated by the big interests. The present political franchise and the special representation for vested interests vitiate the composition of legislatures which are the electoral colleges for the constitution-making body ; moreover the continuance of the Indian princes, the special representation for the vested interests also in the Indian State legislatures which cannot but be reflected in the Constituent Assembly, all point to the danger of the firm entrenchment of such interests in the future State, for at least a long time to come. For the present Constituent Assembly is not the instrument of expression of the sovereign will of the Indian people as originally envisaged by the Congress. Out of its labours may come an India which is likely to be but a monotonous repetition of every Western State, a capitalist-democracy in which the power of the masses, if not emasculated as in a totalitarian state, is certainly in danger of being crippled.

The Congress has declared for a Kisan Majdoor Praja Raj. In modern parlance it may be considered the equivalent of a Socialist State. Without committing oneself to any particular existing pattern, we may strive to evolve a pattern of our own, as best

suited to our own genius and the objective situation in which we have our setting ; yet at the same time conforming to certain unalterable fundamental principles that are of universal application.

The question before us is not merely acceptance or rejection of the British proposals, but rather in spite of these or apart from them how best to create a people's Raj—in which all power would be vested in the masses of the country. That is why we have today to seek ways and means of achieving our objectives in the shortest time possible and in the most perfect form.

Our attention has been focussed so long and so intensely on our British enemy, that we are apt to overlook their counterparts in this country the Indian big interests who have been the pillars that have supported the foreign-initiated and imperialist-dominated economic structure notwithstanding their patriotic protestations. They have allied themselves with the independence struggle only in so far as political power can be translated in terms of their own future advancement. National planning, development of natural resources of this country, industrialisation, expansion of trade,—have all been but stepping stones to larger profits. We have only to look at countries like America which though highly developed and very wealthy, still sport the same basic problems as ourselves. The staggering disparity both in material wealth and opportunity between the few and the masses, chronic unemployment, domination of entire national economy by a handful who can hold the state at their mercy ; the continuous absence of social and economic security, except in the nature of doles—like quinine doses for chronic malarial conditions—the mosquito-breeding marshes and swarms being allowed to thrive while malaria is sought to be fought by little doses of drugs. The roots of social evils are allowed to flourish and mere sedatives are applied. So, if the mistakes and miseries of the other countries are to be avoided and if this evil system that breeds so much sorrow and horrors of war is to be destroyed, then India must build on a socialist basis—on the basis of full and equal justice for all—in other words the State to be an expression of the people's aspirations, will, and power, and such a state to control and direct the national economy. But the instrument of administra-

tion shall be purely democratic and not become dominated by any one class whether that authority be founded on numerical majority or tradition or on any other basis. Such a state alone can ensure the welfare of all sections of the people.

To achieve this an appropriate programme is called for. It is obvious that any compromise with the British becomes also a compromise with the prevailing vested interests ; in other words, an economic and social *status quo* with some minor modifications. Therefore no compromise is desirable with the British except on the basis of complete transfer of power to a fully independent India who will be left untrammelled to share her destiny according to her will. In addition to the elimination of the British elements from its present dominant position, complete elimination of all the vested interest classes, through democratic processes, i.e., legislation, if possible, or direct revolutionary action if necessary as circumstances dictate, is equally imperative. The masses of India as well as the progressive intellectual elements have to be organised for this purpose—each section to be organised on the basis of both the ultimate objective as well as its day-to-day grievances and struggles. Thus powerful organisations are necessary to rally together Kisans, Mazdoors, students, etc. and various other types of workers from the lower middle class such as clerks and petty officers as also those of the forward intellectuals from the middle class. All these need to be made to cluster round a revolutionary leadership as of the socialists which must hold aloft the political banner and become the main organ of this revolutionary struggle. It is therefore essential that we should so mobilise our forces within the Congress and without, through the wide country as to imbue the rank and file with this noble purpose. The composition and leadership of our political movement must be shaped to enable it to fulfil this momentous task. This effort is bound to be met with resistance as it has been in the past, and the newer and more militant element are bound to be checked by the reactionary forces in the country. Every attempt must therefore be made to strengthen and fortify ourselves, not weaken by disruptive activity. Opposition for the sake of opposition is the weapon of the weak. Our main strength must flow from positive action,

from ceaseless industry and unwavering devotion to the great cause to which we have dedicated ourselves. We must thus win the confidence of the masses as well as of our colleagues. We must never give cause even to our political opponents to doubt our bona fides even while differing in our political views.

Reactionary forces dominate our political life and even the Congress today in various guises. The most familiar and most dangerous of them is communalism based on the play on the passions and petty prejudices of castes and communities. Its power has been amply demonstrated by Jinnah and the Muslim League, whose policies and actions are leading to dangerous internal disruption, and who have sought British patronage all through these years.

## YOUTH AND THE FIGHT FOR INDEPENDENCE\*

**T**HE youth movement is one of the most powerful forces affecting modern life and is playing a significant part in the history of the world. Youth stands for a clear and far-seeing vision and with its boundless spirit and enthusiasm paves the way for the regeneration of life. Nowhere can its importance be minimised, and certainly not in a country like India, where a new life needs to be built up on the demolition of the old.

The tasks facing the Indian youths are many, but they can be summed up briefly as the establishment of freedom in the country. There is much heated controversy over the question of Dominion Status versus Independence—a very needless and useless controversy it seems to me. Freedom or Swaraj can mean but one thing—absolute freedom for each individual as well as collective growth and evolution. It means the establishment of an order in the country which will give the fullest opportunity for each to grow physically, culturally and morally, unhampered by such economic and social laws and conventions as demoralise human beings. A free country is one which does not permit exploitation of the masses either by foreigners or by a handful of its own people, nor become a party to the exploitation of other weaker nations.

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\* Address at the Bombay Presidency Youth Conference, Ahmedabad, 14th December 1929.

Taking this as our basis we have to understand what each of the terms "Independence" and "Dominion Status" connotes. They may mean just mere words as exemplified in the Independence of Egypt or the Dominion Status of South Africa. Independent Egypt is today at the mercy of the powerful army of Great Britain and cannot call her soul her own, although the epithet "Independence" is applied to her. We have the case of South Africa which is supposed to have practically full freedom—yes; but freedom for whom? For the White rulers. The Negroes, the children of the soil, and the Indians who are settlers there, are alike trodden down and exploited ruthlessly. It may be years before the real African attains freedom.

Thus coming to India, we shall need to ask the same question: 'What are the full implications of each of these two destinies held before us?' The first doubt that troubles us naturally after suffering for many years from racial discrimination and humiliation is, whether it is ever possible for us to become equal partners with a group of Anglo-Saxons who are too well known to be charged with a tense sense of racial superiority and snobishness, a deep-rooted contempt for the coloured people and centuries of habit of exploiting them. And even if such a miracle were possible, is India, after centuries of suffering at the hands of an Imperial Power, herself going to become a partner in this unholy game of Imperialism?

Empires have thrived on the exploitation of the colonies. It is, therefore, clear that India's struggle has to be against world Imperialism, for Imperialism is a united force that has its roots in Capitalism and is preserved by Militarism. These are the three aspects of one and the same force and one cannot fight against any one of them without countering its other counterparts. It seems, therefore, to me that at least to the youth which stands for real freedom, the issue is perfectly clear.

The advent of the Labour Government in England is little reflected in India. So far as India or any colony of Britannia goes, it seems to matter very little who sits in Westminster or who rules at Whitehall. For Britain continues as an imperialist power standing for imperial interests above all others. Its ruthless suppression of the Arab revolt and the continued arrests and

trials of labour leaders in India are proof of this. There are as yet no signs of the change of heart of which we hear so much. The Labour Government's dealings with Egypt have been no better and have given no satisfaction to the Egyptians.

Another instance of the Labour Government's dubious policy, this time in foreign affairs, is the much lauded visit to the U.S.A. of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald ostensibly for the purpose of effecting naval disarmament. But the European Press has been a little too clever for the machinations of MacDonald and Hoover and the cat is now out of the bag! Behind all the "lofty" conversations are going on rather solid dealings in hard real property, viz., the colonies. The U.S.A. and England are coming to certain decisions with regard to the individual policy of each in the various colonial countries. America is to have a free hand in Latin America and China, while England is to retain her hold in India and the Near East. This has been the real character of the MacDonald-Hoover conversations—drawing frontiers for their respective spheres of influence. As for naval disarmament, it looms larger than ever in the shape of a magnificently heavy item under the head "naval defence" in the national budget!

Indian youth must realise one thing, and that is that India will never get freedom so cheaply as through a Round Table Conference which has just been mooted. She has paid a heavy toll already for her ideal, but she will have to pay a heavier one—a million-fold—in the future before she approaches anywhere near freedom. We have many times very glibly declared Independence; but beyond the passing of a resolution and hoisting of the flag, we have done nothing to implement that solemn declaration.

Youth is endowed with two admirable assets—imagination and daring—which can capture the very elements and paint the distant skies. But these virtues however laudable, are not enough to work a revolution. They have to be put through an organisational mould to give these dynamics a constructive shape.

Youth has, therefore, to organise itself on the basis of action as also help organise every section of society. But the bulwark of such a national structure are mass organisations, such as that

of the peasants and workers on the basis of their day-to-day grievances and economic and social demands. This edifice has to become the organ of struggle, through which the nation fulfils its destiny.

We should not shirk the issue now, but must take the plunge—one bold leap for better or for worse. One thing we must not anticipate, and that is defeat. It must always be onward—onward to victory.

We never seem to get over our despondency of 1921. If you youths today declare that you stand for complete independence for India, you must, if you mean business, draw up a programme of action for launching a movement for its attainment. It will be attacked mercilessly ; it will be sought to be mutilated and crushed ; but out of each such attempt will arise a newer and a better spirit, chastened and refined by martyrdom. We are fond of holding up ourselves as ready to become martyrs. But when the time comes if we retreat, and say—wait till the next blow, and then the next, each time the coward will get the better of us. We cannot pursue such a philosophy of procrastination or defeatism. We must prepare ourselves for action and planned action. I would therefore strongly advise this conference to draft a definite scheme as would lead us to the launching of a major struggle on the issue of complete independence. Only if you mean to do that, then support the resolution on that objective. Then you will be able to stand before the national and international forums as clean and honest soldiers of freedom. My friends, remain true to your convictions, take the leap and do not fear the consequences.

But if we are to launch our campaign we shall have to get our workers trained not only in the technique of action, but political philosophy as well. I cannot imagine a free India where poverty and oppression still linger, where exploitation holds sway or medieval forms of autocratic rule of monarchy continue. All these must go. The question of freedom in India is not one of colour ; it is not merely a war against the White man ; it is a fight against all exploitation, no matter whether it be White or Brown. There is a grave danger in overlooking the possibilities of our own forms of exploitation because of a false sense

of patriotism. We forget that it is its Indian allies who have enabled imperialism to maintain and stabilise itself in this country for over a century.

There are a great many social evils that youth would want to fight against. First and foremost are all forms of social exploitation. In a free India there cannot be any caste or sex discrimination or inequality. These cannot be tolerated. When the new constitution of a free India is being evolved, definite provision must be made against the existing humiliating discriminations and inequalities between man and man, between man and woman. Its foundations must be based on the principle of equality and justice for all. Then alone can freedom have any meaning or reality.

The struggle that we envisage, therefore, will have to be an all-embracing revolution—political, social and economic. Of course, the term “revolution” is much abused and misunderstood. It usually conveys fighting with bombs and guns. But with us it can only mean a great upheaval through moral force—for a disarmed people has not much choice in the matter, even apart from the ideal of non-violence which we have adopted as our ideal and which alone can make our struggle today practicable. Thus I am sure youth will recreate and build a new India far more glorious than she has ever been in the past.

## KARNATAK LEADS THE WAY\*

**M**ANGALORE lies at the foot of the giant Western Ghats in a secluded little spot, unknown and unobserved by the usual traveller. But she is like a modest maiden who lingers in the background but once you come to gaze upon her countenance you are captivated forever. And so those who come to see the mighty mountains discover this lovely fawn lingering shyly in its shadows, I am sure they are more than compensated for the other deficiencies of the place. It is our pride that those who come once come back to us again and again.

It was thirteen years ago that a provincial political conference

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\* Karnataka Political Conference, Mangalore, May 1935.



was held here under the presidentship of a lady, and today in electing me to this position, Karnatak has shown a consistent desire for honouring womanhood. It is in this light alone that I stand before you, and I am proud because the women of India are once again taking their place in the service of their country. No organisation can call itself truly National unless it has men and women working in it side by side.

Karnatak no less than the rest of India has made resplendent history in its struggle for independence. The enthusiasm and selflessness with which thousands of her men and women fought in the country's cause has won the admiration of India. It is a chapter of which anyone can be proud. I wish to offer my tribute to all those who worked and served. I shall not say sacrificed and suffered, for no service is worth the name in which there is no suffering and sacrifice involved. It has proved that the desire for freedom has taken deep root, and our striving must be for the realisation of that object for which no cause is too great and no sacrifice too big. India's millions are ready to serve her and will not rest until freedom is won.

I cannot but refer particularly to Karwar district and the marvellous history men and women there have made for posterity through the memorable no-tax campaign. I hope not only Karnatak but the whole of India will draw inspiration from it.

No movement can be built up unless it formulates a clear ideology and encourages the growth of new ideals and thoughts, directs public opinion, creates new platforms for their expression, exposition and discussion ; for all of which gatherings such as these are essential.

This conference meets at a time when the country is agitated over a constitution that is sought to be thrust on the country by an outside authority. The issue involved is more fundamental than whether it is a defective or deficient constitution. The issue is one of the right of self-determination.

Imperialism has many ways of stabilising itself in the face of the rising colonial peoples' challenge. One way is by deflecting the assault by subtle devices—such as the grant from time to time of what are called "Reforms." They are in reality merely variations in the same old technique of domination, by shifting

the emphasis or adding to the complex character of the outer forms without actually changing the inner content of their rule.

The present move is one such. It serves to distract the nation's attention by side-tracking the real issues and raising debates on irrelevant problems, thus undermining the tempo of national fervour. The slices, bits and crumbs of power, such as these new Reforms hold out, are also designed to serve as bribes to win over the weaker and the wavering of the national elements and drive fresh wedges into the national solidarity. In addition every such plan plays upon the feelings of the sectional, religious and communal groups by pretending to offer each some special privilege which only encourages each to move away from the central national focal point into blind alleys.

It is therefore necessary that the so-called Reforms should be resisted and the entire machinery paralysed by a powerful mass movement. Effective transfer of political power can never come through legislative activities alone. They have, however, their own place. But to exploit them to the fullest, they must be linked up with mass activities.

The objective to be posed before the country is the Constituent Assembly. The idea is not a new one, being as old as democracy itself. But in Indian politics, the idea has yet to develop and get crystallised. It has already caught the imagination of the country, for it unequivocally rejects the self-arrogated right of the British Parliament to dictate to India its political destiny. It has to become, therefore, the inevitable companion of the other slogan "Rejection of the New Constitution." It is the positive aspect of the same—an answer to the challenge of England.

A Constituent Assembly is the people's most natural and appropriate vehicle through which to express the principle of self-determination. This is one of the basic foundations of freedom, for it is the inherent right of every nation to decide for itself the form and the nature of the Constitution and the Government it wants. This principle has been recognised throughout history when a nation has asserted its right to Independence. When the Turkish Empire began to break up in the nineteenth century, Rumania, Bulgaria, Greece, claimed the right of self-determination and an Assembly was convened by each of these nations

for that purpose. After the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, each of the nations that freed itself from the Imperial yoke, claimed the same right. It is obvious therefore that if an Assembly is to express a nation's full power, it can materialise only as the logical termination of a mass struggle and ascendancy to power. Historical events as well as one's own simple commonsense point to this. A Constituent Assembly is the spontaneous expression of a nation's ability and strength to assert its right of self-determination.

There are two distinct dangers in calling a Constituent Assembly with the goodwill of Imperialism. It will not carry mass interest and therefore mass sanction with it. Our political movement has yet to penetrate the masses and take on their revolutionary character. The middle-class interest is not and cannot be identified with mass interest. And so unless the Constituent Assembly is the outcome of the people's bid for power and they are directly and vitally represented in it, the result is bound to be reactionary and the old order of exploitation of the many by the few may continue.

The other danger is of compromise so as to make it acceptable to all the parties and particularly the British Parliament, since without its sanction under the existing circumstances it will have no effect. But if we are to approach this task of constitution-making from this angle, then the real interest of the country is likely to be jeopardised. Therefore all such compromises should be avoided even at the risk of creating a crisis.

A true Constituent Assembly, therefore, can come into existence and perform its historical function only after power has passed into the hands of the people. Nor can it be a glorified All-Parties' Conference as some quarters conceive it to be. The Constituent Assembly, if it is to be real and effective, must be an organ of the people to determine the Constitution and nature of the Government of free India. Obviously therefore, those who would compose it will be those who have participated in the revolutionary struggle.

There is one other problem to be taken into consideration before the design of a free India is completed—that of the Indian States. The policy of non-interference which a member of the Congress

Working Committee termed "unlaminar," pursued by the Congress so far, undoubtedly, needs drastic revision. It betrays on our part a lack of cohesion and even of a desire to avoid coming to grips with reality. There are obvious historical, social and economic reasons why old feudalistic forms should not and cannot be maintained when industrial capitalism which succeeded it over three centuries ago is itself passing away. Left to herself there is no doubt that India would have gone the way of other free countries, for she is very open to world influences and the moulding hand of fate. Historically speaking, therefore, the Indian States today have no place in India, and without the British patronage and protection no basis or reality.

But the Congress cannot afford to maintain the present policy very much longer without injuring the entire cause of India and her struggle for freedom. To expect the Rulers to throw in their lot with Indian Democracy indicates lack of a historical sense and of a proper understanding of the nature of political factors. The simplicity of this expectation is too naive to be convincing. Even were the Congress to convene a Constituent Assembly with Government sanction how would it be possible to carry it to its logical conclusion if 70 million people were to go unrepresented? There is only one solution to this, to drop the over-sensitiveness about those princes who think nothing of lavishing fortunes on polo ponies and 'de luxe' cars while their Education and Health Departments starve and persons die of hunger. It is only when those 70 million who are today shut out of the national struggle throw in their lot with the rest of the country that India can enter on her serious responsibilities as a free State.

The Communal Award has once again brought the communal problem to the forefront. Nationalism and communalism have developed simultaneously in India. As the former gradually changes from a form of protest to one of seizure of power, narrower personal considerations come to the surface. The coming of the Reforms and speculation on the possibilities to follow have to date shaped and reshaped the edges of communal competition.

However much the nature of this struggle may be camouflaged,

obviously it is a bid for political power and leadership. The new Constitution seeks to exploit this to the fullest by still further emphasising the separatist tendencies by giving them larger statutory recognition ; and unless a growing sense of common citizenship cuts across this division, it is bound to perpetuate itself.

In all countries that can boast of a long tradition of civilisation, the tendency to dwell on past glories and condemn the sorry present is irresistible. It is also used as a lever to rouse the national self-respect. The Congress too indulged in this revivalism. In a mass movement revivalism does not dwell so much on history as on sentiment and emotion. It is not always a discriminating and rational appraisal of the past but much more a stimulation of one's vanity, an element of compensation for the present humiliations. Such revivalism tended to throw greater emphasis on sectarian and religious factors than on common human elements. However harmless these may have been in themselves, they offered an easy target to those who wished to exploit them for their own personal ends by giving them political twists and colouring. The majority community being Hindu, the slogans, nomenclatures and terminologies, in usage in the Congress have been mostly from the Hindu tradition. This dual nature has made it possible for the Muslims to identify the Congress with Hindus, exaggerate the differences and masquerade them as irreconcilable extremes, thus inflaming both the communities.

The greatest mischief wrought by British imperialism was converting religious groups into political minorities. To say that the interests of a particular religious group is distinct from that of the rest of the population of the country, is subversive of the national interest and is bound to undermine national solidarity. One may as well say that the interest of the Catholic community in England is distinct from that of the Protestant, or introduce separate electorates for the British Parliament for Anglicans, Presbyterians or Non-conformists. Separate electorates have served to reinforce all the disintegrating tendencies. Where the rising nationalist forces would have encouraged modernist and progressive techniques, legalised sectarianism has definitely set the clock back. For no political constitution can adhere to social principles and at the same time play up to narrow religious demarcations.

Following the latter course would mean that all mass organisations would have to be on religious lines instead of economic. Revivalism and separate electorates supplement each other and favour a cultural and political milieu on the separatist basis. The latter freed the majority from canvassing the support and therefore the goodwill of the minorities and *vice versa*, and set into liquidation the central assets of common heritage, interests and responsibilities. The consciousness of general welfare shifted its centre of gravity from the national to the sectional. As the poison seeps through the entire social gamut, disintegration spreads and all ideals of common social co-operation have an increasingly losing battle to fight against the growing dominant longing for privilege as against justice. As long as the Congress keeps to its militant programme against imperialism, it must effectively cut across these sectarian lines. It is this which has rallied all peoples to its side. The Congress must now take this a step further by creating points of collaboration and affiliations on the basis of ideologies which alone can bring mutual confidence.

If the Congress lapses more and more into parliamentary programme and power-politics, the sectarian tensions must become more intense and weaken the opportunities for developing real political parties on ideological issues. Struggle for power imparts fixity and rigidity to the dominant contesting groups, and hurls all political ambition into their camps. In reality the communal tangle is a puny one, but its very pettiness augurs tragedy for the bigger cause. In the last analysis communal amity is the interest of the common man and its success can be measured only in proportion to the success of their absorption into the economic and social reconstruction of society that will symbolise unifying interests.

For this the people have to be trained for co-operative activities, from which can be generated that team-spirit and dignity which must form the corner-stone of the future democratic order. This can be done by developing mass organisations that will instead of fostering communal competitions encourage co-operative units. The basis of all social organisations is to procure such opportunities to every individual and help him to feel himself the proud member of a common society which provides avenues for

creative work. We have suffered together so long. That is a poignant bond. We must share in the joy of creation and the union that springs from it.

The main problem, however, staring us in the face is economic—particularly the acute and widespread agrarian discontentment. Never before had it assumed such proportions. For while the prices of agricultural products have steadily fallen, the taxes have steadily mounted up.

It has indeed a grim humour in it when we consider that the rural population is weighed down under the yoke of debt of almost an astronomical size—900 crores of rupees. The phenomenal fall in prices which is one of the main causes of the distress is no doubt due to international causes and shows the steady breakdown of a system which has brought nothing but sorrow and hunger to the majority of mankind. All isolated attempts to repair the situation might prove abortive or at best a weak patchwork. The root-cause lies in an economic system in which millions toil and reap want, that the few may idle and roll in luxury ; in which there is no scientific planning for production and distribution ; and private profit operates as the prime motive-power behind the entire economic mechanism ; where prices fall or rise haphazardly having no scientific guidance. The economic machine being today very closely knit internationally, it is hardly possible for any country or group to function isolatedly and save itself from these catastrophes or ignore their grip. If India is to escape further disasters of this kind she must work consciously along with similar world-forces and elements to replace this system by a more scientific, just and human form of society for all mankind.

That the possibilities of the situation have been brought to a climax is evident from the fact that all heads are today turned towards the villages. A gradual realisation has come that the leadership of the peasantry is the tactical task of the moment. There is Gandhiji's attempt to reorganise rural economy through the revival of village industries ; and the socialist and other left-wing effort to create a mass struggle through peasant organisation. This shows how eloquently the country has grasped the important role of the peasantry in an industrially backward country. It

also reveals clearly how imperative it is that the Congress, the premier national organisation should seize the situation and exploit it as an instrument for organising the mass movement for the attainment of freedom. This can be realised only through the organisation of the peasants into Kisan Sanghs on the basis of their economic grievances ; for the masses cannot be drawn into a radical political movement except through a fight for their immediate demands ; and it is in the course of such a struggle that their consciousness will be awakened and progressively stimulated into a realisation of the basic necessity for the conquest of political power. India is a land of peasants—the peasants are India—and therefore mobilisation of this mass energy is a principal condition for any great political movement.

Karnatak shares with the other provinces the woes of the peasants. The no-tax campaign of Karwar district came as a result of the general depression due to heavy taxation and the rapid fall in the prices without any corresponding relief in the shape of remission or suspension of payment. The district has still not recovered from the effects of this disastrous policy. It is a well-known fact that the taxes were not paid because they could not be paid—the people simply did not have the money wherewith to pay them. The land taxes in India, as we know, carry off the bare means of subsistence left to the cultivator. There was wholesale confiscation of property and arrests of men and women for non-payment. The earning members being taken away, children and the disabled and the women were left in the streets in hundreds. And all because the hard toilers could not find a market for their rich and valuable produce, thanks to an economic chaos, that a mad profiteering system has wrought in the world. Today there are hundreds of families without land, without houses, without means of livelihood. Over 200 acres of rich green land have been confiscated. Those magnificent gardens producing rich and rare spices and nuts, the envy and admiration of all, are fallen into deplorable decay and those that cherished and reared them are reduced to penury.

Famines are as regular in some districts of the Province such as Bijapur, Bellary and some parts of Dharwar as seasons. We are perpetually left to the remorseless caprices of chance. Since



the Government fails to draw upon the remedies that vast scientific knowledge has opened up for us to meet these repeated disasters.

The district of South Kanara is groaning under a fresh enhancement of land tax. The imposition of an extra twelve per cent on an already over-taxed peasantry is hitting the agriculturists very hard. This is the most heavily taxed district in the Presidency, as is obvious from the following figures : The net average for Kanara without water is 6-4-0 as against 6-7-0 with water for Tanjore. The yield from the best wet lands in Kanara is 800 lbs. per acre compared with 1115 lbs. per acre in Tanjore. The tax has been steadily raised through the last 100 years until it is now 100 per cent. Even waste and unproductive land is taxed. The entire history of revenue settlement in Kanara is tragic and deplorable. The Vijayanagar rulers used to claim  $1/6$  share on the first crop leaving the rest and the subsequent crops to the agriculturists. Unproductive and waste land was left untaxed. In the time of Hyder Ali and Tippu Sultan a punitive tax was laid as a disciplinary measure for disloyalty. When the East India Company assumed control it assessed the land on the tax in vogue at the time plus the punitive tax ! History has rarely heard of loyalty being taxed as in Kanara. As a result of the heavy taxation, the peasants revolted and a no-tax campaign was launched. To silence them the Revenue Collector made a negligible reduction and promised that this rate would be permanently fixed. But the Indian peasant knows only too well the value of Government's promises. In 1902 a cruel surprise was sprung on these simple-hearted people in the shape of a fresh enhancement of 75 per cent. In 1935 this unbearable burden was made heavier still by a further increase of 12 per cent.

Since 1902, the peasantry has been deteriorating. Its condition is pitiable. Out of a total of 1,38,000 holdings that had somehow managed to survive, 1,20,000 small ryots are threatened with being wiped out. The number of those who cannot get even one full meal a day will now increase by eight times. It will mean widespread distress of an unprecedented character.

There is but one remedy, the effective transference of power to the people, which alone can bring redress, safety and freedom.

## THE COMMUNAL PROBLEM—A SOCIALIST PERSPECTIVE\*

THE larger communal tangle or triangle as it has also been called, is not a natural, political, or social phenomenon in this country. It is a device conceived and carried out by British imperialism to maintain itself in security in this vast land. As a matter of fact any of India's major problems can only be posed and appraised against her colonial background—that is her retarded economy. Had India been able to industrialise in the course of her normal economic evolution, the fuel for the current raging conflagration could never have been provided. The real communal problem has under its thin veneer of religiosity a stark economic core.

Let us glance back at history. With the destruction of Indian indigenous industries, the India Government's vast secretariat became the only job-offering agency. Louis Fischer has truly said that Government jobs are a major industry in India. In the period immediately following the 1857 Indian War of Independence, the British definitely encouraged the Hindu element to supply the large army of clerical staff that it needed. This meant a rapid reorientation of the Hindu community by the swift creation of the nucleus of the present Indian middle-class. The impact of the new English education and its influence on those who resorted to it, too, was swift and far-reaching. The newly growing middle-class, faced with even a more rapidly growing scarcity of jobs, now cut off from the old rural and feudalised occupations, had naturally to turn to modern business and, where possible, industry.

The Muslims, who at the very start got left behind in this race, naturally remained tied to their ancient feudal moorings a

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\* Extract from the address at the Provincial Socialist Conventions, Mangalore, April 1947.

longer time. As the new middle-class which, thanks to the nature of the early British policy was predominantly Hindu, began from the early twentieth century to form the spearhead of the nationalist revolt, the British decided to reverse their old policy and now court the Muslims instead and set the former by the latter. So communal electorates, communal ratios in services, etc., were introduced for this purpose.

As greater and greater frustrations overtook the Hindu middle-class with rising unemployment facing its educated youth, and as the budding industrialists kept forever coming up against the British commercial interests, the discontentment commenced flowing into the rational tide from all sides swelling it into a mighty flood. In this context the communal problem began to show up its political character more and more. Under a retarded national economy, opportunities were few and the rush on those few terrific. The British who had created the situation, now used it to pit one community against the other, ever widening the gulf between the two. But the logical national march towards freedom could not be arrested. The anti-British sentiment spread like wild-fire and the Muslim masses were soon caught in it too.

As the progressive and radical forces gather strength, proportionately the elements of reaction too muster strength to beat back the new challenge. In different countries it assumes different guises. But the commonest and most feasible is that of religion or of race. It would perhaps be more correct to say perversions of both. We have seen in recent years how in spite of the vast strides made by science and its dispassionate pursuit by objective minds, the very findings of anthropology and ethnology are perverted to reinforce brutal reactionary forces as in the case of the Nazi rule ; the oppression of the coloured peoples in Asia and Africa ; the discrimination against negroes in America and the Harijans in India ; the widespread anti-Semitism in Europe. All these are but phases of the same perversions of noble truths, prostituted to serve class or sectional interests.

Often these are availed of by a third interested party in order to bolster itself up. The British in India have all along played that role, putting community against community, religious groups against religious groups through bribery, favouritism, distribution

of patronage and the like, successfully cutting across that gigantic national unity wrought by the 1857 revolution. In course of time these were followed by constitutional procedures to perpetuate further the growing cleavages, such as the introduction of communal electorates, communal composition of legislatures, communal ratios in appointment to offices, admission to educational and other institutions, sanctioning of grants ; and a host of such equally unhealthy practices.

Although for the purpose of raising mass frenzy, the religious aspect is occasionally spot-lighted, communalism has definitely taken on a blatantly political colour and is continuing to accentuate that aspect more and more ; which reveals the true nature of communalism in its stark naked form as a rabid political and social reactionary force, with little of religion or culture about it. The sentiment which the British in the first instance exploited to establish more firmly their hold over so vast a land and so mighty a concourse of people, is now being used by equally unscrupulous adventurers for their own narrow selfish ends. This is amply proved by a perusal of the record of communal organisations and communal leaders.

It is against this background that the role of the Muslim League gets clear, for ironically it was on this very anti-British and intense patriotic feeling of the Muslims and not on any religious sop, that the concept of Pakistan was founded. The Muslims wanted freedom as passionately as the Hindus. Mohamed Ali Jinnah was going to get it for them ; only he told them that he wanted them to be free from not merely the British oppressors but the even worse Hindu exploiters. Here like Hitler who used the weapon of Aryan purity and anti-Semitism to drive his people to frenzy, Jinnah used his clever idiom of a " Muslim nation " as the driving force. The Muslim masses were economically and socially too backward and too ignorant to understand the true nature of the many problems that weighed them down. They therefore naturally fell easy prey to this clever machination. For Mr. Jinnah had realised only too well that the rising mass discontent could only be met by some concrete *political factor*, however distorted or perverted it be, and not mere empty religious shibboleths.

It is very important for us to remember that Pakistan has been raised on the hunger of the Muslim masses for freedom. At the same time Jinnah has been able to rally and keep tied to the League the younger intellectuals and the other growing middle-classes by getting Government favours, offices, posts distributed to them and preventing thereby their joining the nationalist movement.

The League has no record of any constructive work for the amelioration of the Muslim masses. The League ministries can take no credit for any such special services. The rule of the League has been to aid the British directly or indirectly to enable them to continue their stranglehold and stall the freedom movement through deliberate obstruction of the nationalist tide. It is in the very nature of the League, constituted as its leadership is, of big vested interests, that it cannot serve the Indian masses, be they Hindus or Muslims. Had the Congress from the earliest days countered this by courageously pursuing an economic programme for the masses and identified itself completely with the peasantry as against the landlords, it would have effectively undermined the League's efforts at disruption and the two-nation theory would have failed to find the soil in which to implant its poisonous stem. Unfortunately, the Congress failed to follow any such scientific line and the Muslim masses fell a prey to medievalism—fanatical, irrational religious fervour that can have never any reality in their day-to-day struggle.

The Hindu section on the other hand, partly through ignorance but more so because of the frustration caused partly by the absence of any positive programme of mass contact and social reconstruction work and partly by the acute tension produced by the long delay in the attainment of power due to Britain's reluctance to part with power, plunged deeper and more recklessly into a similar abyss of fanatical passions, unable and too ill-equipped to face the logic of a rapidly changing situation. 'It has however sought refuge in a demagogic past. It tries to cover the complex present with the veil of a vague past, tinting the harsh realities with illusive shades and the gross angles with sentimental contours, conjuring up in short by-gone ghosts to lend heroics to commonplace sentiments. Unfortunately as the aggress-

siveness of the Muslim League has advanced, proportionately has the lure of this Hindu mirage deepened, ensnaring in its meshes raw immature minds who, thwarted by an overpowering present, fill the imagination with past achievements, which at least for the fleeting moment give them a sense of security. This is how Nazism raised itself on the ruins of a prostrate Germany, feeding young and old alike on the rosy illusions of an all-conquering Aryan race. The Indian youth which is rapidly falling victim to similar antics, must beware of its dangers. India can neither save itself nor solve its problems by donning the faded armour of memories, however glorious they be. The menace of the present cannot be met by a reorientation to the past. Rather is it a bold and courageous reckoning up of the existing conditions and their appraisal which alone can steer us along the proper path.

The crux of the modern world problem is its illogical economic system which has given our society a banal character that outrages all our moral sense of fairness and justice. In fact its very foundations are anti-social and it cannot but breed crime and warfare. The problem of India is no different for each country but mirrors the world surface with its spiked piles of discontentment and stagnant pools of frustration. A society so blatantly based on violence and exploitation where the majority is unable to secure in spite of its hard industry, even bare minimum subsistence, and denied normal opportunities for cultivating its talents or giving expression to its creative urge, is the common enemy of all and the existing social evils beat all the toiling masses down, irrespective of caste, creed or religion. Similarly poverty is not the monopoly of any one particular community. It is common to all exploited people. For the exploiting elements, the landlords and capitalists are also distributed amongst every community. The exploitation of the masses by the vested interests is common to all sections. A Hindu landlord is no kinder to a Hindu kisan than a Muslim landlord to a Muslim kisan ; nor does a Hindu or a Muslim employer pay any higher wages to his workers simply because they belong to his community. He pays the same as any employer to any employee. These are acid tests and in all these instances hardly any differences are visible. Employers demand the same hard hours of labour from their employees quite

irrespective of the latter's caste, creed or community. The Hindu landlords of Bihar have exploited their Hindu tenants even as the Muslim landlords of Sind have exploited their Muslim tenants. The class character is not altered or modified by religious or cultural factors—and that is really the inherent weakness of a communal movement. It can only thrive on the ignorance of the masses and must collapse before socially aware, understanding minds. Neither the Muslim nor the Hindu businessmen had any compunction in making fortunes out of the Bengal famine that destroyed millions of Muslims and Hindus alike. For when famine comes it laps up all communities like a hungry flame. The Muslims of Bengal died like flies in spite of a Muslim Ministry in power. Obviously, then, communalism does not help to solve these problems. It becomes crystal clear now that communal politics is pursued essentially with a view to maintain the existing order by those who have an economic or social stake in it and in order to defeat the new strength the long-exploited masses are attempting to gather to destroy this structure.

Unreal issues are therefore raised to divert the growing consciousness of the masses into futile channels and by this deflection dissipate their mounting strength. The "Nation" theory so ardently pressed by the League is meant therefore to confuse the Muslim masses and camouflage the real social issues. These people are led into believing that all their miseries spring from only one source, a Hindu-dominated country, and if only they could get "their territory" separated from the Hindu tyranny, all their troubles would instantly disappear. In the absence of any real political or economic education, they are inclined to swallow this sop and lend themselves to working up frenzied agitations in support of what is known as Pakistan.

For the menace we face today is not Pakistan but what has made it possible—the deep-rooted economic problems which have made life an endless agony for the Muslim masses, from which they seek liberation. What they need to understand is that economic exploitation is not determined by the religious or racial character of society but only by its class character. That it is not only they who suffer from these ills but also their Hindu brothers ; that social oppression is a factor common to our whole

society irrespective of any particular religious influence. Just as social evils cut across religious and communal cleavages, so do social measures. Every effort to combat and mitigate the social problems—poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, scarcity—is a blow against communalism. For it is such diseases that always pair off with religious obscurantism and demagogic politics. Religious politics is too unreal to stand the glare of a rational searchlight.

There is no doubt that heavy disappointment is in store for the communal dominated masses, for it will not take them long to realise that demagogic politics is no cure for their deep-seated hunger and humiliation. It is to meet such a moment that we have to prepare now, instead of weeping over lost opportunities or present disasters. For the logical sequence to disillusionment is frustration fraught with dangerous consequences. It is this frustration that we must prevent by the radical transformation of this diseased social organism of ours. For in direct proportion to our capacity and success in curing our own social evils can we morally influence those who are today beyond the pale of our direct contact. The Muslim masses will judge us by the measure of prosperity and freedom from exploitation we can bring to those toiling masses whom today we have the power to influence. It is when speculation passes into action alone that it can impress ; for experience is knowledge and knowledge is the seed of conviction. The longer we delay our immediate task of radically altering our society and emancipating our masses, the longer is the lease of life for Pakistan in concept or in fact. The pressure of the moment is terrific, the urgency for action all-compelling. Here and now we must prove to ourselves as to those who question our bona fides, what we stand for—a democratic state based on the will of the people, which is not a mere pious platitude on paper but a warm, inspiring accomplishment.

Ours is a land of many customs, faiths, languages, costumes and styles of cooking. Yet these in the past fused into a rich pattern of infinite moods and rhythms, the very differences adding to the common wealth of our national culture rather than disrupting or undermining it. Where man is fast integrating towards a common world culture, it is rightly assumed that national differences such as these, do not seek to divide. On the



contrary they add richness by their variety like a multi-coloured design or a grand symphony. We have every reason to feel proud of our variety which is but an evidence of the strong creative vein in our national composition, and not succumb to an apologetic attitude as we are apt to do because of the British undermining of our self-confidence by the creation of an inferiority complex.

Man has always been a wandering animal. He is eternally straying over vast spaces in large or small hordes, uprooting and replanting himself. People have taken root in new climes and new settings and become the children of the soil until their origin ceases to be even a memory and which can be unearthed out of mouldy old archives only as subjects of remote and detached interest to the historian. That fact ceases to be of any vital significance to the warm-flowing life of the people of today. So with the origin of the Muslim in India. The Muslims of India today are as much Indians as the Hindus. They are none of them migrants. Their language is one with that of the Hindus. All Muslims do not speak Urdu, nor is Urdu spoken only by the Muslims. The lovely mosques and mausoleums of India are as Indian as the temples or the stupas. There is no natural dividing line there. Such divisions are fantastic creations of brains perverted by self-interest or class-interest as happened with the Nazis. Let us, for instance, realistically picture population migrations in this country. What would the highly commercialised city-bred Borahs—a Muslim version of the Parsis—do in the ruralised tracts of East Bengal or the Punjab? How would the Moplas, an aquatic people reared on the bosom of undulating expanses of water, something of whose restlessness and reckless abandon they have imbibed, fare in the rugged inhospitable hill tracts of the Frontier, with their own peculiar language and customs only akin to the people of Malabar?

A genuine expression of the Islamic tenets would mean a classless society with the wealth of the country belonging to all, that is, to the State; for private possession is alien to Islam. Such a state would base itself on the sovereignty of the people as a whole and hold its powers at the will of the people.

But on the contrary the trend is today in the opposite direc-

tion. Whether the communal leadership be Hindu or Muslim, it is controlled each in its own respective field by purely reactionary forces.

To arrest that process and inject into its place health-giving, robust nationalism is one of our chief tasks. If this reactionary force is not destroyed immediately it will entrench itself in the State machinery for the same sectarian ends. Communalists do not and cannot work for the betterment of their community. All experiences past and present prove that communal leadership is built up by a group of self-seeking individuals who want to arrogate to themselves all power. It is the Indian version of Hitler's Nazism where blue eyes and light hair were deliberately formed into a special caste by itself, in order to seize power and wield it for the benefit of that caste, destroying millions of their own people in the process. That is the logical culmination of communalism against which we have to build up all our national strength. For it is not just one single communal factor we have to contend with. All the reactionary forces are firmly lined up today behind this communal clique and it is our bounden duty to call their bluff and expose them.

The world we live in today is one of stern logic and scientific precision. There is little room in it except for adaptability to meet sentiment with rational argument, smother clinches with scientific analysis, face chaos with dialectical skill and sharpness. Where these resources are not called upon to aid, then social and political confusion must follow, as today in India. After all, reason and rationale cannot be counted upon to plunge into irrational frenzy. Barbarism is the last resort of the unreasoning mind. It is the weapon of desperation. When reaction finds that it can no more meet the rising social challenges it must either abdicate or fall back on orgies of violence, which serve at least for the time being in deflecting the straight course of revolution and diffusing its energy. The greater its own sense of insecurity, the more forceful its exhortations to violence. The weaker the intellectual integrity of the masses, the easier their readiness to fall victims to these wily traps.

The incitement to organised violence through mass frenzy by a reactionary leadership, marks a significant phase in our political

history—as always and everywhere it has sought to camouflage its real character under the guise of religion. The Christian crusaders fought no more for the Christian holy land than do the Muslim masses for their sacred Pakistan. As the challenge of a growing, conscious people becomes more pronounced, its assertive qualities more determined, the traditional citadels of economic and social power must strive to deal the rising new order a death blow. The core of all religious wars has been economic and political domination. If religion be faith, then it is outside its very nature to lend itself to fratricidal orgies. For faith is a stream that springs from within and is neither protected nor destroyed from without. The very act of coercion is a complete negation of all that religion has stood for or meant emotionally for people.

This shattering uncovering of primitive passions reveals to us the serious gaps in our past work. Scientific thinking and a realistic grasp of the true nature of our everyday problems can alone transmute passion into creative strength and remould society into a garden of colour and beauty, instead of the jungle that it now is for man to prey on man with a planned ferocity unknown even to the beasts of the forest.

It is obvious that the waves of violence which are rocking the country cannot be abated by either hitting back with greater violence or by a mere appeal to cold reason. The old order has been set adrift from its old moorings. We have now to fall back with greater earnestness and effort on all the available social and cultural material out of which more positive structures can be raised, and new avenues cut which time and patience can convert into abiding channels like new veins in a system through which continued streams of creative and invigorating activities can be made to flow until the organism heaves up anew and functions as a normal, healthy mechanism. Every nerve must be bent to foster scientific thinking and rational analysis through every resource available, administrative or public or private. Activities of a national character must be encouraged on a nation-wide basis with all the emphasis on its universal character, especially so with organisations of the masses which must be converted from their present local units coloured aggressively by the emotions of

local environments into large national bodies with national objectives. Very intensive education of the masses must be undertaken where the conflagration has not spread, and the real nature of their political and social problems explained. True, when a conflagration is on, public attention gets all riveted on the flames which throw emotions into a chaotic vortex. No doubt what little can be salvaged should be. But our long-range constructive efforts have to be in those directions where the fear has not yet caught up. Instead if we just allow ourselves to become whiffs or straw in this tornado and be tossed on its billows, then only greater disaster can overtake us.

The main thing is not to be diverted or deflected from our course by the present disturbances, shattering though they are ; on the contrary they should serve to intensify our urge and accelerate our effort in the other direction.

History, reason and commonsense are with us. For the very violence is but the sign of desperation ; it shows the gathering pressure of social forces which can neither be abated nor overcome. The fact also remains that the basic economic problem of India, even as its political problem, is one and indivisible. The measures that can solve poverty and ignorance in one province, can solve them in another. The class that oppresses one section of the community can also oppress another. Religion, community nor even caste identity is a safeguard against class exploitation, much less artificial frontiers. Neither the Muslim landlords of Sind nor the Muslim capitalists of Bengal will cease to exploit the Muslim masses the moment Pakistan walls them off from "Hindu" India. But it is when these Muslim masses peep over that wall apprehensively and shyly and see what is happening on the other side that they will determine whether the wall is to continue to stand or go. The onus of that responsibility rests on us. The Muslims are one with us. Even according to Jinnah's grudging admission at least 75 per cent. of the Muslims of today are Hindu converts—actually the figure would probably be at least 20 per cent. higher. There are not two nations—there are only two forces, those that create and those that destroy—the former have a future, the latter none.

India seems now destined to go through a period of such un-

settlement and disorders. But no matter how widespread or intensive it may become, one must bear in mind that it is only a phase which has to be lived through, maintaining as much of our mental balance as possible. It is all the more reason why we should concentrate on the positive and constructive side, setting our face towards the future. Our very failures in the past have now to be our future warning posts, beacons of maturity and experience. One of the quickest and most effective ways to do that is to transform our society as rapidly as possible, eradicating completely the ills that breed strife. For the experience can appeal more eloquently to the mass mind as to what is wrong with their existence and how to overcome it, than words, books or slides. Give them the comfort of a harmonious society and they will cling on to peace and become the guardians of their own society.

## PAKISTAN AND THE SHIFTING OF POPULATION\*

CERTAIN sections in India today are toying around, casually or emphatically, with the idea of shifting populations. To catch some of its flavour, one may dip one's nose into Europe, the gambolling ground of all such pastimes—"The devil's breath has started to brew once more even before the old pot has ceased to sizzle," commented the London *Tribune* when the general plans for the remaking of Europe in the post-war world were announced after the Potsdam conference.

Well may many a wise-head nod in sad assent, heavy with the memory of unforgettable decades which followed similar international bouts in the past, and sigh in despair, that man is the most incorrigible creature who will never learn, even through bitter experience.

For man has grown so sophisticated that he has broken all bounds; even the primitive laws of the jungle have no more sanctions for him. He has become a law unto himself. What is more he has devised instruments of the mind, even as of metal, which work on the human mind even as weapons cut

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\* *Blitz*, February 1947.

through muscular tissues, so that millions of others may be cajoled or coerced into joining his wild camp. It is Europe that has set the pace and given the scientific touch to mutual destruction which today in this atomic age is almost threatening to run away with it and end all human existence on this little globe of ours. One of the weapons which European nationals have used for this indulgence is the minority problem. It is the common high wind which is quickly puffed up into a world tornado to sweep destruction far and wide.

Like the poor, the minorities have always been there, and like the poor they have neither been liquidated nor overcome. In fact the problem has been kept festering like an incurable wound ; for it has always come in handy to some section or other for furthering its own self-interest, as in India. In fact, most wars have ironically enough been "ostensibly" manufactured more out of the crocodile tears a big nation has shed over some small national, some obscure little "minority," than out of any genuine gunpowder cause.

In fact minorities have been made into the regular dynamite such as set off every Hitlerite expedition in World War II. There, almost every minority was the potential fifth column which ultimately broke up country after country. But after all, this was a game at which anybody could play and they who had played around with it were the last to take risks with others. The Nazis therefore wanted no minorities under their own feet. So in their scheme of European Re-settlement, solution of minorities naturally figured very big. Their favourite resort was compulsory population shifts. The idea seems to have caught on like so many other Nazi methods, in spite of all the general condemnation of their ruthless ways. So an undreamed of population shift was set into motion, a process which today staggers even one's wildest imagination.

The game begins by the players at the political chess board suddenly magnifying an almost subconscious tribal awareness in nationals, injecting into the conception a sense of inviolability that has no reality in the deeper human values. A vague, nebulous dormant group is galvanised into a passionate "nation" that begins to demand its sovereign rights. Similarly with frontiers.

They are lent a sanctity which stands out in a ludicrous light in this war-torn continent where frontiers have been subject to violent change almost from decade to decade. But then man refuses to behave like a reasonable being, and indulges in an audacious wilfulness, to be disapproved even in a child.

These population shifts, as we have noted, had begun under the Nazi régime before the advent of World War II when 800,000 Germans were forcibly uprooted and repatriated from Italian and Russian areas to Germany, in exchange for Italian and Russian minorities from German-controlled areas. For naturally enough if in its anxiety to be rid of these minorities Germany had to prevail upon Italy and Russia to take their people back, it had also to be prepared for the deliberate uprooting of its own people from those countries to move them in. The war accelerated and widened this process and now Germans came to be settled in the Reich's new border regions—the Polish provinces of Slovakia, Carinthia, etc. In a sense, these shifts were meaningless; they had only served to turn these areas into more heterogeneous trouble-spots.

By early 1942, some 250,000 of these Germans on their homeward march were diverted into Czechoslovakia adding to the already complicated population problem there, one which had been made to cost that country its very independence. But reason and sanity have rarely guided men's actions—it is rather exigencies to which he has usually succumbed. The figures of these resettled Germans went on rapidly mounting up. By the spring of 1943, about 400,000 Germans were said to have made their homes in Belgium, Holland, Denmark and Norway, while Warsaw, the Polish capital, alone is said to have absorbed a sudden influx of 200,000.

In short, where the victorious German arms planted the Swastika, there ill-starred German people were also planted along with it, just summarily lifted and moved about like toys in a baby wagon. They were possibly moved in there as bulwarks of permanent Germanism—a monument to man's insatiable vanity and an illusory faith in his own permanency. A conservative estimate puts the total number of Germans transferred to war-time German occupied territories at 2,500,000. This however was

only the beginning of the end. Inevitably and inscrutably the heavy wheels of history moved on, almost like a time-bomb. For it would be less than fair to history to credit the Nazis alone with this fantastic technique. The origin is probably lost in the dim recesses of Time's hoary memory.

For the purpose of modern history, however, there is the exchange of populations, and one of the most ambitious of such exchanges was that effected between Greece and Turkey in 1923, carried out under the auspices of the League of Nations. In exchange for 380,000 Muslims transferred from Greece, 800,000 Greeks were repatriated from Turkey. The resultant economic dislocation apart from human suffering, was even more lasting, great as was the hardship wrought through diseases, overcrowding, lack of food, separation from families, etc. Turkey lost a whole community of skilled artisans, receiving in return only relatively backward peasants ; while the Greek economy got upset by the influx of a large urban crowd in exchange for its sturdy peasants. It took considerable time, not to speak of heavy expenditure, to get through these resettlements which proved one of the contributory causes of the heavy Greek loans that led to the economic crisis in that country in the early thirties. The only thing that can be said in this case was that it was voluntary as against the compulsory ones which are becoming a new feature of our times.

President Benes, the implacable opponent of the German Nazis, declared before the Foreign Members' Association in London in 1942 : " If a minority problem is likely to be intractable, I am prepared for the grim necessity of population exchanges. They can create many hardships, even injustices. But I am bound to say that they may be worthwhile if they help to establish a more permanent equilibrium." The Greek Minister to London, Mr. Simopoulos, pointed out at the Inter-Allied meeting at London in 1941, that the exchange of populations between Turkey and Greece, harsh though it was, facilitated the work of enabling two ancient enemies becoming friendly neighbours.

Realities however speak with a less convincing tongue. For all such generalisations are dangerous as we shall presently



observe, even if in specific instances, such as that of Turkey and Greece, some doubtful permanent benefits may have outweighed the material, physical and psychological hardships involved.

Now if the purpose of population transfers is to tidy up the frontiers, it is well to remember, no matter with what care frontiers are drawn, that they are bound to be prone to changes sooner or later, until some World Federation comes into operation which will tone down ultra-nationalism and curb the present fanatical insistence on the fetish of national sovereignty of every single national group. Let us take for instance, the miserable plight of the Germans moved into German-occupied countries of the war period, under the recently redrawn frontiers, who are under pressure to move out again and quickly too. A reign of terror has started against Germans in Czechoslovakia, for instance, as a reprisal against the past ignoble role of the Sudeten Germans in that country. As a result, the innocent as usual suffer along with the guilty. This is what H. N. Brailsford writes about them in the *New Statesman and Nation*.

" Their plight in that country is tragic. What is planned is not expulsion but robbery on a colossal scale. German peasants have been expropriated without compensation and deprived of land, the families had for several centuries, together with their cattle and goods. In the towns the principle of expulsion is as summary as possible. A quarter is cordoned off and all Germans inhabiting it have to leave their homes in half an hour. Of their possessions they may take what they can carry.

" They are warned that if they prefer to remain in the country, they and their children will lose their language rights, for all German books are to be surrendered. They may not use the post, their letters are returned to them undelivered. They are forbidden to use the railway. . . . The economic policy pending expulsion is one of starvation. The German is allowed to change only 30 marks worth, roughly £2 every month, and ordered to live on that, while the general regulations permit 100 marks. Germans are severely rationed and may buy neither meat, milk nor vegetables even for the children, not because of food shortage but as a punitive measure."

Let us take East Prussia, a 100 per cent. German place ; out

of a population of 2½ million, barely 400,000 would be non-Germans. Now that this area has been torn away from the German Reich, the Germans are being pulled out of the soil where they had taken root for several centuries, and driven into the new and much shrunken Germany. Some 10 million Germans are once again in the process of being resettled. A graphic picture of what is happening to them may be obtained from a report in the *Daily Herald* of London. "As an illustration of what is happening, is a train now in a siding near Bruck. It started 16 days ago from Yugoslavia loaded with German women and children. Since they left their homes in cattle trucks, they have had no food apart from what they brought with them, nor any other attention. The train was brought to Vienna and turned back as they had nowhere to go and today it still stands in a siding, forlorn, unattended, while children die and women go insane. . . . The Austrian Red Cross is not allowed to visit the refugee camps nor to treat the inmates." "But we must remember that minorities constitute only a small part of Europe's total dislocated population on the move," said Mr. Bevin, British Foreign Secretary, sometime ago. "A large section, more than 60 per cent. of the population of these islands was subjected suddenly to having to be torn out of their homes and driven somewhere else." That is the picture but not the whole of it. These migrants, they are not all going the same way but rather in all directions. The streams run, cross and recross like a complicated pattern. The number of war refugees in the Soviet Union alone are estimated at 10 million. The Jews on the lookout for a safe haven are around 17 million. The minorities being moved back to the new Reich, 10 million. The foreign labour forcibly taken to Germany to be repatriated, 10 to 12 million. Thus the spiral of figures goes up and up, close to 50 million.

Last November, the London *Times* correspondent in Dusseldorf reported a sharp fall in morale in Westphalia on hearing that 22,500 resident Germans and refugees were required to move to make room for the occupation troops and their families—the removals to take place in three phases.

Similarly, large-scale resettlement of farm families from the devastated areas of White Russia into the new homes in Kalinin-

grad—the former German Koenigsburg—was pushed ahead with considerable speed. One thousand seven hundred collective farmers and their families were moved in the first shift alone, with more to follow. The settlers were given all transport facilities, implements, live-stock, and dwellings provided for themselves as well as for their cattle.

It is with righteous indignation that Henry C. Wolfe, a staunch opponent of population transfers, comments : “ Only an irresponsible person would suggest wholesale migration of 30 to 40 million people, though minorities should be protected. A drastic experiment of this kind has resulted in chaos and suffering such as Europe has not seen since the Thirty Years’ War.”

While in countries like India, the shifting of populations is being mooted as an idea, in Europe, it has gone beyond the experimental stage. A real resettlement may mean a period spread out over several decades. For all we know, World War III might just catch it up and restart the shifting process all over again, often in reversing directions. It sounds cynical, but harsher things have happened and from all indications worse things are in the offing.

## INDIAN STATES: THEIR POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS

NEVER perhaps since the Indian Independence War of 1857 has the problem of the Indian States projected itself in so decisive a manner into the fast-moving kaleidoscopic politics of India, as today. The States are playing as strategic a role at the moment as they did a century ago. To understand its exact significance one needs to survey briefly the historic background and the past role of these States.

The latest “ Memorandum on Indian States ” published by the Government lists 601 States of vast dissimilarity in size, population and character, ranging from Hyderabad with an area of 82,698 square miles, a population of 14 million and an annual revenue of 8½ crores, to the tiny State of Bilbari with a population

of 27 souls and an annual revenue of Rs. 80. Similarly they also vary in the powers they possess, quite irrespective of the other above-mentioned characteristics. They are usually classified into two divisions, those entitled to a salute of guns, the others not, but this too indicates little. The Butler Committee's classification is equally unscientific and not even historically sound, for it is thus : Those which are members of the Chamber of Princes in their own right, those represented through elected representatives ; and estate Jagirs and others. But apart from suggesting that the first two categories have in " greater or less degree political power, legislative, executive and judicial, over their subjects " it does not reveal the actual nature of the set-up. The nearest we get to it is in Joseph Chailley's division which may be briefly summed up as follows :

1. The very few who govern according to European ideas.
2. Those who have introduced the formalities of reforms.

3. Those who still imagine that they are the State, its resources their private property, and their chief business, pleasure. There is also an attempt made mainly by the State rulers to classify according to their respective *de jure* and *de facto* status, which is today equally unreal, for under the British pressure, they have all been gradually made to conform to " a single type " as revealed by Lord Reading in his famous letter to the Nizam on 26th March 1926, when he reminded the latter that the title " faithful ally which your Exalted Highness enjoys has not the effect of putting your government in a category separate from that of other States under the paramountcy of the British Crown." He further developed an extension of paramountcy as " based not only upon treaties and engagements but existing independently of them and quite apart from its prerogative in matters relating to foreign powers and policies. . . . No ruler of an Indian State can justifiably claim to negotiate with the British Government on an equal footing." He also ruled that " It is the right and privilege of the Paramount Power to decide all disputes that may arise between States or between one of the States and itself and even though a court of Arbitration may be appointed in certain cases, its function is merely to offer independent advice

to the Government of India, with whom the decision rests." Thus in theory and in practice the treaties between the British power and the States have been treated as scraps of paper, except on occasions when the former has wanted to wrangle something out of the latter and then the British Premier or the Viceroy has referred to our "faithful allies" with an excessive warmth that was as dubious as their political promises to India.

Only a few out of these hundreds of States can trace an uninterrupted history of their present entity back to the very early times. For most of them are only survivals of former dynasties and powers which struggled to survive after the termination of the bitter fight for supremacy between the Moghul Empire and the British in the latter's favour. Some of them had begun to break loose even as the Moghul rule declined and won easy recognition from the new rulers; while some of the others such as the Central India and Rajput States had been resisting first the Moghuls and later the Mahrattas and owed their present sovereignty to British intervention and patronage. Those in Western India were mostly principalities carved out of the Mahratta domain by soldiers of fortune who succeeded in winning British favour when the latter downed the Mahratta power. There are two significant remarks of note in this context, one is by the Duke of Wellington in 1806 and the other by Sir Charles Aitchison in 1808, both subscribing to the view that the defeat of Mysore, of the Mahratta chiefs and Holkar established once and for all the supremacy of British power in India. Sir George Barlow, an officer of Lord Wellesley's, recorded: "It is absolutely necessary that no native State should be left to exist in India which is not upheld by the British power or the political conduct of which is not under its absolute control." This policy has been earnestly pursued all through the British regime in this country and it is not only idle and illusory but positively dangerous, both for the States and the rest of India, for a few perverts to indulge in vain-glorious sentiment of "independent kingdoms" which simply don't exist.

There was a definite policy behind the bolstering up of the Indian princes. For one of the causes of the trouble of 1857 was suspected to have been the deposition of Indian rulers in

pursuance of the policy of direct annexation. One therefore reads with ironic interest the Queen's Proclamation promising that "we shall respect the rights, dignity and honour of the native princes as our own," paraphrased as follows by Lord Canning, the first Viceroy of India : "It was long ago said by Sir John Malcolm that if we made India into Zillahs or British districts, it was not in the nature of things, that our Empire should last 50 years ; but that if we could keep up a number of native States without political power but as royal instruments, we should exist in India as long as our naval supremacy was maintained. Of the substantial truth of this opinion I have no doubt ; the recent events have made it more deserving of our attention than ever. It is well to remember at this stage that the 1857 war was frustrated by the British power with the timely and substantial help of many of the State rulers, among whom the Nizam deserves special mention, and with whose active co-operation, to quote Lord Canning, the British Crown became 'the unquestioned ruler and paramount power in all India' and is for the first time brought face to face with feudatory chiefs. There is a reality in the suzerainty of England which never existed before and which is not only felt but acknowledged by the chiefs." In Prof. Westlake's collected Papers, he says : "The Indian States have lost the character of independence not through any epoch-making declaration of British Sovereignty but by a gradual change in the policy pursued towards them by the British Government."

As a matter of fact, these practices go even further back than the advent of direct British control, to the early eighties when the East India Company also made a practice of interfering with the internal administration of those States which had walked into this Company's wily net of intrigues, taken the help of its arms and forces, with some even resting on the Company's mercy and patronage. No Ministers were appointed in such States without the Company's concurrence and no succession could take place without its sanction. The Davidson Committee's Report on the Indian States very frankly avows : "It is historically correct to avow that the rise of British to power brought with it a new stability to many of India's most ancient dynasties and rescued or at least ensured the survival of others which without its aid

would certainly have foundered during the eighteenth century. There were some others which disappeared after challenging unsuccessfully the British power, others through their own inherent weakness, others again through the failure of natural heirs and the application of the doctrine of lapse." For many were restricted by Lord Dalhousie from adoption in the absence of natural heirs. In the "British Crown and the Indian States" is stated with considerable conviction that "the paramount power in actual practice takes upon itself to perform functions in relation to individual States which involve varying degrees of control over their internal government, from mere advice upon the spontaneous request of a State, through the stage of unsolicited advice which the State is expected to follow right up to the stage of complete control of the whole administration of a State." Lord Reading in his famous Berar Case letter stated in perfectly unambiguous terms: "The right of the British Government to intervene in the internal affairs of the Indian State is another instance of the consequences necessarily involved in the supremacy of the British Crown. . . . The varying degrees of internal sovereignty which the rulers enjoy are all subject to the due exercise by the Paramount Power of this responsibility."

Just what exactly is this Paramountcy and how did it originate? Sir Lee Warner commented thus upon it: "There is a paramount power in the British Crown of which the extent is wisely left undefined. There is a subordination in the Indian States which is understood but not explained." As Mr. M. Ratnaswamy puts it: "The idea of paramountcy is an original political idea forged by the British in the factory of experience." The representatives of the British Power at these States became virtual rulers. "Repositories of almost unique powers," that is how Shri Srinivas Sastri defined their position. "Secrecy, secret despatches, mysterious communications, orders and regulations which nobody can understand, which vary from State to State, these form the pabulum of a whole hierarchy of officers."

This in short is the matter in which these States who are so fond of arrogating to themselves sovereign powers, have actually functioned throughout the British regime, and now that the time has come to reconstruct a free independent India, they seek on

these same illusory grounds to slow down its natural political and economic progress. An attempt is sought to be made to perpetuate the bogey of a separate prerogative of the Crown and obligations towards the States resting upon treaties, engagements, sanads, usages, none of which have ever had any reality, but were merely used as excuses to keep the States linked irrevocably to the British Crown, and acting as agents responsible to it. Sir Sivawamy Iyer pertinently explains in support of the correct historical interpretation of that position that the Crown acted, not in a personal capacity or in the capacity of Sovereign of England, but in the capacity of the Ruler of British India, in its relations with Indian States. The last word on this has been uttered by K. R. R. Sastry in his "Indian States" as follows: "Legal cob-webs apart, the Indian States owe their subordinate co-operation not to the Crown in his personal or individual aspect, but to His Majesty the Emperor of India in his political aspect."

It is both significant as well as logical from British Imperialism's standpoint that the people of these six hundred and odd States should be nowhere in its picture. That is in truth the crux of the whole problem, for their studied and calculated ignoring of the 70 million, in practice means treating them as mere pawns in the game. It also indicates that the foreign power still continues to be interested in maintaining these areas as stagnant pools of political and social reaction to be used as their own bases.

Let us now analyse the attitude of the Indian princes. They are chary and apprehensive of the future democratic government in this country. They sense a threat to their present privileges and authoritarian rule from the doctrinaire radicalism of the nationalist forces in the country. They regard all progressive measures as would transfer greater power to the people, ensure to them economic and social security, as unwarranted encroachment upon their existing rights. These are some of the fears entertained by these autocrats, especially those who have been wielding unquestioned powers in the most despotic manner in their own States. They are amongst those who boss the Chamber of Princes show and are the prime movers in the national sabotage and who, by their recalcitrant methods, are seeking to strike



at the very roots of democracy. In spite of their tending lip sympathy to the cause of Indian freedom, these elements who had so willingly and unhesitatingly bowed to the foreign paramountcy are today resenting and resisting the prospect of accepting the authority of a nationalist Indian regime.

For that is in reality the implication of the Indian princes' role in the politics of their country today. It is fraught with immense dangers. For they who prefer alien bureaucrats to the accredited leaders of the people, are no friends of India's freedom.

The aim of nationalist India is to take over complete power from the foreign agents of Imperialism and vest it in the people, which is what just cuts the ground from under the existing dictatorial personal rule of these princes. The refusal or unwillingness of the rulers to collaborate with an Indian Government must receive at our hands the most serious treatment. For it is a blatantly gross act of open hostility to the entire Indian nation and must be unhesitatingly treated as such.

Every effort has been made to meet their difficulties, but on the principle of sovereignty there can be no compromise. The sovereignty is vested in the people of the States and not the ruling princes. It is on these that power has to devolve when the foreign rule comes to an end. The States belong to them. To rule is their inherent right. This inalienable right is denied to them both by the British bureaucracy and their own rulers. It was the disloyalty of some of these rulers that lost India to the British. Today again a similar drama is being enacted. They can't prevent the advent of a national Government, but they want to buttress their reactionary power in big and little islands all over the country. It can be frustrated only through a powerful, organised movement of the people of the States. The role of the States' people is at the moment most strategic and decisive. They must rise to the call of the hour, terminate this dangerous game of reaction and allow the rising political tempo to find its natural level.

## THE VILLAGE AND THE FUTURE

**S**INCE our conception of the future State is the establishment of a Government rooted in the will of the people and sensitive to their authority, it is most essential that they should be made alive through the exercising of their faculties of selection, discrimination and power of decision, to evolve and build up such a State through their own conscious effort and experience. For this the foundations have to be laid in the small communities, especially so in the rural areas. Each village should grow into a little republic and the people made aware of their civic duties and responsibilities.

A long period of slavery has bred in us a tendency to lean on even doubtful props. We have thus got into the habit of always looking to the Government for every little thing, the force of self-help having become almost paralysed. This lethargy has to be overcome and replaced by the dynamic of self-regeneration. An all-round programme of activity of community-reconstruction must be fostered, no detail being too small to be overlooked. Thus experiments in agricultural improvement must go hand in hand with prohibition and simpler marriages ; fostering of cottage industries with running of schools and dispensaries ; schemes in road construction and small irrigation projects to be initiated along with sports clubs and cultural squads ; village sanitation must be enforced together with libraries and museums. Each community must learn to govern itself, settle its disputes, keep its own law and order, regulate its social conventions, modes of human relationship, and shoulder its public responsibilities through the creation of elected panchayats wielding power through democratic usages. It is through what Gandhiji has called Samagra Gram Seva that Gram Rajya can be evolved out of the genius and creative strength of the people, made self-reliant, proud of their vitality and happy in their consciousness of constructive power exercised from day to day in their little lives. Thus can the foundations of a Mazdoor Kisan Praja Rajya be laid.

But for reality to be given to that dream of every individual, every activity no matter how small, must be fused with the dynamic of a long-delayed change. The constructive spirit must be one of revolutionary fervour, strength and drive to bring about the necessary transformation in our entire national structure. Constructive work should not be a sectarian cult or a camouflage for power politics as it is sought to be made ; but rather a weapon for bringing about the vast and sweeping changes our society today calls for. Constructive work must cease to be a retrograde purist cult and become the vehicle for carrying into effective result the organised and disciplined strength of a people who mean to be free.

The programme is not exhaustive but illustrative of the possibilities and of the pattern to be followed in the main. It will need amplification and adaptation to local conditions as also objective situations. Unimaginative rigidity in regard to methods of work or instruments of struggle serves to destroy rather than create and strengthen the content. While our principles remain our bedrock, modes of achievement should be more fluid, for with a proper approach, mass power can be generated through even seemingly unimportant factors.

### **WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN PERSPECTIVE\***

**A**LTHOUGH the women's movement has fairly advanced and matured, I feel the need today more than ever to restate its case, because of the continued misunderstanding of its nature and growth by a large number of men and quite a few women alike. The women's movement is essentially a social movement and part of the process of enabling a constituent part of society to adjust itself to the constantly changing social and economic conditions, and trying to influence those changes and conditions with a view to minimising irritations and conflicts and making for the largest measure of harmony. Thus it operates as an integral part of the progressive social structure in the broadest sense, and is not a sex war as so many mechanically believe or

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\* Presidential Address at the All-India Women's Conference, 7th April 1944, Bombay.

are led to believe. For the issues round which it revolves, such as right of votes, inheritance, entry into professions and the like, are an intrinsic part of the bigger issues striving to overcome the prevailing undemocratic practices that deny common rights to certain sections of society. It is therefore a comrade to the struggle of the backward castes and the long-oppressed classes alike, seeking to regain the lost inheritance of man's inalienable rights. To give it any other interpretation or shear it off to isolate it from the main current, is socially injurious. It is equally erroneous to hold the "nature of man" responsible for women's disabilities and give the women's movement an anti-man twist. It is the nature of our society which is at fault and our drive has to be directed against faulty social institutions.

The women's movement, therefore, does not seek to make women either fight men or imitate them. It rather seeks to instil into them a consciousness of their own faculties and functions and create a respect for those of the other sex. Thus alone can society be conditioned to accept the two as equals. To fit women theoretically and practically into this scheme, women have to be encouraged to develop their gifts and talents. This has therefore to be one of the main planks of the movement.

Closely allied to a false conception of the women's movement is also the false value allotted to the women's economic worth. The correct premise to start from is the recognition of the social division of labour between the sexes, which gives the lie direct to the middle and upper-class conception of women as domestic and social parasites, living on their husbands and contributing nothing. Woman power is basic and the woman must be recognised as a social and economic factor on her own, not as an assistant to man. Little recognised are the tremendous labours of the housewife, and even in the most highly industrialised countries house-keeping still remains the major industry, and the housewives still form the majority. To state blandly that woman produces children and rears them, cooks food, cleans, washes, is not enough. According to industrial economy she produces labour power, and labour power is basic, for without it none of the other kinds of power can be made to operate. But that too is not good enough. The housewife is as much of a working

woman as a factory worker. She expends more energy and time and skill in the production of commodities than the unionised, legally protected worker, for her hours are unlimited and her tools countless. Tradition has always tended to place a lower value on the home production and services. One reason may be because such goods and services do not come on the market but only cater to the family group as consumers. Yet, really speaking, this very fact should make them, as one writer says, "priceless." For, since society depends upon the family not only for biological perpetuation but cultural as well, woman as the guardian of the home and one of its stabilising factors, will also continue to remain "priceless." The tragedy is that its very non-pecuniary and non-competitive character has lowered the prestige of the woman's role. Husbands who claim they "support" their wives simply because the latter do not bring home a pay cheque, are being anti-social, upsetting the harmonious social equilibrium and breaking social solidarity. For it is time society recognised that every housewife supports herself though she may not scratch at a desk or run a machine, by the social labour she performs and the contribution she makes towards the maintenance of the home and its happiness.

The entrance of women into extra-domestic activities has to be welcomed, for it provides a wider field for their talents, breaks the relative segregation of the women as a sex, relaxes the restrictions that otherwise narrow women's functions. What is strange is that as long as woman confines herself to her domestic duties, she is censured as a burden on man, whereas if she tries to earn a livelihood outside the home, she is equally condemned as a competitor of man, trying to take his livelihood away from him. Truly did Robert Ingersoll say that a fact will fit all other facts, but a lie would fit nothing except another lie made expressly for that purpose. Correctly viewed and rightly interpreted, the women's movement is found resting on a scientific basis, shaped by a rational ideology and indispensable in the social scheme of things.

The field of operations that lie before the Conference is ever-widening. Many varied activities beckon and the temptation to rush in all directions is great. But like an autumnal matron

who has developed a high sense of discrimination but not lost her youthful vigour and enthusiasm, the Conference would do well to concentrate on a few items and do them well. First in importance I would place the training of social services, so eminently needed yet so grievously neglected. It was my privilege to have my modest little experiment in this field accepted by the Conference. The ready response and co-operation it received from other organisations, workers and the public heartens me to appeal once again to the provincial branches of the Conference to make this one of the chief programmes of work for the year, with any necessary modifications in the original scheme. Closely allied to this is the necessity for training women in handicrafts and fostering hand industries. Those of our branches which are already working in this direction, one of them even turning out paper, will testify to the utility of such ventures. They will provide a means of livelihood to many helpless women. Incidentally, they will add to the industrial production of our country at a time when it is not able to meet our needs. Every branch should initiate and run whatever industries it is best in a position to introduce. In such undertakings, I am sure, we can always count on the help and co-operation of other experienced bodies who are already in the field but who do not attempt the special training and employment of women, a task this Conference is best fitted for.

As essential and as scarce are the health-services, particularly nursing. A rough set of figures say, there is one nurse for every 56,000 people or to 256 square miles. The Health visitors are about one per 3,50,000. The maternity and child welfare movement is mostly a week-end show and the entire country can boast of only 800 centres to cater to such a vast area and population. All this makes an appalling picture. While admitting that the Women's Conference is not the body which can build up a complete health-service to meet the country's requirements, I feel sure it can make a small but appreciable contribution. It can recruit women to the nursing profession, encourage many more girls to take courses in public health-nursing, first aid, industrial hygiene, etc., and also get more of such courses introduced in our educational and social institutions. It can help

to organise shorter courses in the general principles of nursing to meet the present emergency in the country. At the same time it should agitate to raise the standard of housing, allowances, training and pay of the nursing staff, with a view to popularising and securing social recognition to this long-despised but most noble of professions. The Conference can also organise relief units out of the available material and co-operate with such bodies as the Women's Reserve Medical Unit formed by the medical women in Delhi, and which did such excellent service in Bengal. Such work deserves our warmest commendation and I can only hope that this worthy example will be followed by other provinces in distress. The branches and sub-branches can certainly dot the country with numerous maternity and child welfare centres, creches, etc.

Although the food problem is the most frightening at the moment and tends to overshadow most others, its causes are beyond the Conference's power to remedy. As long as India's economy continues to be throttled and perverted by foreign interests, hunger and starvation must stalk this land of plenty. Only a careful development of its vast untapped wealth, based on an economy designed to meet the needs of the people by a free Indian people's government, can aspire to overcome this dreadful scourge of perpetual famines. But that can't by any means be our final word on it. As women happen to be the regulators of food in the home they should be more sensitive now than ever to the care and preservation of food, avoid waste in daily consumption as also in lavish hospitality which in the present setting strikes one as painfully incongruous. Working out balanced diets with the limited things available, would also help. The worst sufferers in this tragic drama are the children. In every responsible society they have the first claim on the available resources, particularly milk. But today in our country the man who pays the price gets the milk. So, while adults who are not wholly dependent on this article are able to get large supplies and sometimes even thoughtlessly waste it, children who solely subsist on it are forced to go without it if they do not have sufficient means. Ways and methods must be sought by us to alter this and see that our children, which in reality means several future genera-

tions to come, are not hopelessly undermined. We shall be guilty of a grave crime if we do not get this righted immediately.

In catering to the daily needs of the mere man we too often grossly neglect the cultural side, the delicate creations in word, song and colour in which the dreams of mankind find expression. The Conference must realise its responsibility in fostering creative work. It can encourage women artists and introduce them to the public. It can place their writings with publishers, articles with editors, it can organise concerts and exhibitions and help playwrights produce their plays. This would help release floods of creative streams and direct them into useful channels, thereby enriching the cultural wealth of our country, a wealth which can only be measured by the happiness it brings to them that give and them that receive.

Two happenings affecting women have considerably agitated the public mind—the re-employment of women in mines and the Bills emerging from the deliberations of the Rau Committee and now before the Central Assembly. The former, an act perpetrated in violation of an international agreement and intense national feeling, has raised such a storm of protest both in India and abroad as to bear ample testimony to its unpopularity. The Government arguments that no compulsion is applied and that wages have been increased, have no reality. Poverty drives people to any risks. The very fact that three annas a day is paid for surface work as against eight annas underground is explanation enough. The wage even after this grand increase is about Rs. 15, while the average in other industries in the neighbourhood is around Rs. 25 to 30. In addition, the general conditions are very bad, housing deplorable and inadequate. Although the agitation against this measure has been considerable, it has not been effective, and none of us can rest while it continues. The Women's Conference, if it is to prove an effective instrument for safeguarding women's interests, must get women out of the mines as speedily as possible.

All progressive elements in India have long dreamed of the establishment of a common national legal code, operating irrespective of caste or creed. It is as a step towards this that we welcome the codification of the Hindu Law undertaken by the



Rau Committee, and not as an end in itself. I hope this attempt will fructify in the near future and give us the entire codification as a complete picture, instead of in bits and pieces which so easily lend themselves to distortion when isolated from the whole. The Conference has supported the Intestate Succession Bill in spite of its inadequate nature, because it seeks to give recognition to the principle of women's right. It is regrettable that in the Marriage Bill the barriers of caste and gotra which have lost most of their significance in modern society, have not been overcome. The clause on monogamy is welcome though it would not serve the purpose without certain other changes which are envisaged. The Women's Conference, along with other liberal sections of society has always stood for the institution of marriage. The strong allegiance of women to this institution hardly needs reiteration, for it is proverbial. Instinctively in their own interest and in the interest of social stability so deeply ingrained in them, they will always strive to keep this intact. But all societies including the Hindu, have recognised the need for modification, in its legal attitudes. Laws have had to change from time to time under changing conditions. Those who seek relaxation of a rigid marriage law or of a law that makes differences between the sexes in dispensing justice, do not do so on flimsy grounds but on a deep respect for and understanding of the function of law which is to enable harmonious living. Where it becomes a social injustice, the need for an adjustment has to be recognised by society as imperative.

Some mental and verbal agitation has been afoot over the political nature of the Women's Conference. To a subject people politics is its very life breath. To deny that urge is to deny life. Weighed down though we may be by chains, we continue to live on dreams and thoughts of freedom and a striving towards it. To formulate political sensitiveness into an accusation, is to charge the organisation for being alive. The Women's Conference cannot remain impervious to natural inner urges and cataclysmic outer events. The members of the Conference may have different political affiliations, but I have no doubt they represent an effort to reach the same cherished goal of national freedom by varied paths. But to lose sight of that goal would mean the negation

of the very objective this great organisation stands for : self-respect and social solidarity. But it is in the very nature of its role and function that it should remain non-partisan, unattached to any political school or party. It has been our pride in the past to maintain that and it shall be our duty in the future to preserve it. Those who think and act otherwise, I have no hesitation in saying most emphatically, are no friends of the Conference.

Our insular peninsular outline has widened into the global, with an increasing awareness that we and the rest of the world are but part of a single sphere, that our destinies are inevitably linked, our paths interlocked. Therefore, world policies and events are as much our concern as our affairs, their responsibilities. War as much as peace reveals that the world cannot be divided into islands of freedom and slavery, that the present system of one people holding another down by armed might, no matter with what smooth explanations, leads ultimately to world enslavement by fear and violence, and to colossal human, material and moral destruction. Just as national freedom is but an extension of social freedom the Conference is fighting for, the establishment of the same principle all the world over is of equal interest to us. Until this present system is not only outlawed in principle but abolished in practice, all talk of peace and freedom becomes transitory and meaningless. For peace is not to be achieved by armed victories or by refusing to bear arms, but by the removal of the root causes : imperialism and colonial exploitation that menace peace. Today we witness the fantastic spectacle of big world-powers claiming to fight for the larger freedom and greater happiness of mankind feeling no sense of shame or humiliation in denying those very principles to millions of the people they still continue to exploit and dominate over.

It is not idle curiosity or cheap sentiment which shapes the question that haunts and harasses every diplomat like a family ghost : "What about India ?" We may well say "Everything," for while England continues to hold India in political and economic bondage, the United Nations do nothing short of perpetrating a colossal lie on humanity. India is more than a test, it is a symbol. It is the mirror in which the world sees

the shape of things to be. Today we are witnessing the fantastic spectacle of two warring groups, each assiduously claiming to fight for the larger freedom and greater happiness of mankind. It is towards a world which recognises the right of every nation to determine and rule its own destiny but in a co-operative world order, that the women of India and of the world have to strive for, if humanity is ever to enjoy decency, peace and happiness, and world wars banished from amongst our seasonal pests.

Before closing, I should like to send my thoughts to those millions all over the world whose homes have been gripped by the plight of death and destruction, and whose spirits are lacerated by untold suffering, and offer them sincerest sympathies. In particular, my thoughts turn to the distressed areas within our own homeland and I take this opportunity to pay my humble tribute to the various organisations, volunteer corps and individuals who are so selflessly serving to alleviate suffering. I should like in particular to congratulate our Bengal branch for its splendid work in this terrible distress.

The air is heavy with gloom, the sky rent with cries of pain. Civil liberties, one of the main planks of the Conference, are under perpetual assault. Shadows of suspicion and insincerity deepen and lengthen, blacking out those neon lights mankind had succeeded in lighting through the ages, a growing disregard for the common courtesies and human decencies and a ruthless flouting of popular feeling make a mockery of life. The continued detention of our valued and irreplaceable leaders and comrades who alone at the helm could transform the scene from despair to hope and weave order out of chaos, often dulls our spirit and stays our hand. But this very tragedy should in truth galvanise us into greater and mightier action, for our responsibility becomes doubly greater. There are some who turn to post-war reconstruction as an escape from the terrors of the present. Others believe that in large-scale industrialisation lies the cure. Those who have faith in these patent pills have only to glance at some of the highly industrialised countries to note the havoc wrought out of priceless natural resources and marvellous technical opportunities. Hunger, unemployment, slums, human degradation, all bear eloquent testimony to this tragedy. It is not enough to

produce more. It is more important to determine its basis and the principles that will guide the distribution ; in short, who controls and directs the economy. We cannot surely subscribe to a system in which many produce but few enjoy the benefit, in which artificial scarcity is created by arbitrarily denying men the right to produce, and destroying natural wealth.

Women can have real freedom only in a society which will uphold the sanctity of life and the dignity of labour, a society which will give every child the fullest opportunities for development, enforce and practise those fundamental economic and social rights that entitle every individual to a decent life, the fruits of his or her labour, and the benefits of science and culture. To achieve this the Women's Conference should ally itself with all the progressive forces in the country and develop a vital identity with other oppressed sections of the society to pull its full weight on the side of progress in order to overcome reaction. Thus alone can it meet the present challenge and play an accredited role in the national regeneration of the country.

## SOCIALISM AND MORAL VALUES

**T**ODAY when all sense of human values has become unsettled and the curve dips very low, re-statement of these values in relation to everyday life becomes both an imperative as well as a strenuous task. For values change as conditions of living change, and they can be measured only in so far as they trace the balance between the individual and his environment, his personality and the group he lives in, and maintain its harmony. Today modern civilisation is threatening to shift its value orientation with growing emphasis from the dignity and nobility of personality to that of race, colour, blood and force.

Conflict between the old order and the new is always intense. It is to be found in the differing attitudes and morals of agrarian and industrial societies. To the pastoral age, the mechanical strikes as barbaric, greedy, irreligious, a denial of all that human beings had hitherto held sacred. And yet the new order has released undreamt-of energies with all the power of

science. The old intimacy of family and feudal life tends increasingly to be replaced by a more impersonal and objective life, and in place of the old hierarchy and sanctions, is growing up a new one, built up and interpreted around machine and money. As one educationist puts it : " The mechanics of the free market slowly came to replace the authority of the lords and of the Church itself. *Laissez-faire* individualism was the economic, social and ethical expression of the free market. The cash nexus of the market-place replaced the Church as the nervous system of the new order. The pocket nerve was more than a humorous expression. It was recognition of a basic fact in western culture." In the very process of this change it evolved new values for a larger community life, giving new meaning to personality and to labour.

Thus moral values may change from age to age, nay, from decade to decade, in this high-powered world. But underneath it all, down the centuries and through the generations, there has been running a silken thread of continuity that not all the cataclysmic upheavals can snap, what one might call the absolute values—the single concept which has always given a sense of sanctity to human life, and an abiding worth to certain human attributes : love, sincerity and honesty. Their interpretation may vary in different conditions, as a piece of sculpture may assume different lines in different lights and shades, as a flower may present different hues at different times of the day. But the basic article remains the same. Our rules of conduct may vary and shade off from one to the other, but the compelling force remains the same. The essence of the content continues, the spiritual sanction persists, only the external expressions in terms of rules of morality change. The highest and best in a human being has always meant the same—personal integrity, the capacity to love and serve others more than oneself.

These concepts are there, have always been there, like the stars that are blinded out by the glare of the day, but are fixed in the firmament nevertheless. The world of today is very chaotic but there is no reason for despair, for after all, it is not an elemental chaos which rises out of causes beyond our control like a tornado or a blizzard. This is a social chaos created by

man himself and with effort he can restore the world to order. It is so completely within his capacity and sphere.

The present moment is fraught with unprecedented tension. The human mind has been completely unsettled by the events of the last World War and its terrifying aftermath. The old landmarks have been flooded out, moral standards thrown into utter confusion, creating in humanity an utter frustration. History is after all as much of a biological process as an individual and the symptoms of historical pathology according to psychiatrists are almost identical with those of the individual. For the historical process is only that of collective individuals reacting together to a given situation. In the last three decades humanity has probably lived through experiences as new and as widely flung from each other as events separated by centuries. Humanity has obviously failed to adapt itself to these staggering changes and come to bear the stigma of unbalance. We have only to picture the condition by reproducing a million fold or more, the neurosis conditioned in a single system by constant mental pressure aggravated by repeated new trauma or shock. Neither our psychological nor social faculties have developed adequate power to meet these upsets. This condition is apparent to the discerning eye amongst all peoples—the victors, the vanquished and the neutrals. Referring to this evil, Martin Gumpert, a well-known American physician, says : “The fog of mental and emotional disturbance affects almost every public function and can be felt in the United Nations, in the Congress, in our schools and on our streets.” Another physician, Dr. Mackay, remarks : “There can be no doubt that the misdiagnosis and mismanagement of the so-called functionally ill patient is the medical scandal of the day.” The greater tragedy is that it is much more than a medical scandal—it is a fateful social tragedy. For the malady of unbalance is confined not to just an army of patients but almost our entire society—citizens on whom rests the responsibility for running the State and deciding the destiny of millions. The entire Nazi movement was but a mass hysteria caused no doubt by the action of certain deliberate and calculated stimuli on physically and morally exhausted systems.

Such a condition is brought about either by abnormal shocks

such as during war periods or equally so by living under depressing conditions. The advent of the machine, for instance, threw whole communities into a complicated vortex. Before that human beings lived in tightly knit communities, members clinging closely together, conforming their lives to a well-established pattern, where the rules and the codes were familiar, the paths to be trodden each day, old beaten tracks ; above all every individual was a *wanted* person, one who had an accredited place and a set job. Today we live in a world that is being continually jolted by changes suddenly wrought by fast-moving applied sciences that force us to keep adapting ourselves all the time to rapid changes, so that we hardly know where we belong or what is expected of us. Often when a machine takes over the tasks of thousands of men, these men find themselves uprooted convulsively, with no props to maintain themselves or their families, with complete loss of their social position and prestige. Trained for a certain established society they become helplessly stranded when the girders which maintained that structure are suddenly removed without any forewarning. New forces just blow into this order, scattering men and communities in all directions like whiffs of cotton in a high wind, rendering them placeless and lost economically and socially. The social repercussions which follow are even greater. Because people who train for professions should simultaneously apprentice themselves for social skill as well to enable them to get along with one another with understanding and appreciation, for it is this quality above all which helps maintain social equilibrium in our collective organism. But when men and communities are thrown off the economic rails, social skill too withers. Today the two do not keep pace with each other and the result is the generating of anti-social forces. In fact no substantial effort is made to overcome the lag between the rapid progress in technical skill and the obvious slowness in social skill, to find new adjustments. Humanity does not and cannot stumble into new modes of life just mechanically. It has to be guided in building new institutions and to cope with new environments. This is what Dr. Mayo, an authority on man in the machine age, says : " Social skill shows itself as a capacity to receive communications from others and to respond to the

attitudes and ideas of others in such fashion as to promote congenial participation in a common task."

When men are economically disrupted they necessarily become a prey to obsessive personal preoccupations—brooding, hatred, vindictiveness, plans for revenge on society and the like. Dr. Mayo asserts that "If one observes either industrial workers or university students with sufficient care and continuity, one finds that the proportionate number activated by motives of self-interest, logically elaborated, is excludingly small. They have relapsed into self-interest only when social associations have failed them . . . the issue lies right here—in an industrial mechanical physico-chemical advance so rapid that it has been destructive of all the historic, social and personal relationships. And no compensating organisation or even study of actual social relationships has been developed that might have enabled us to face a period of rapid change with understanding."

In the old days when professions were hereditary, social skill too was handed down from generation to generation. In the present context special provision in our educational system must take its place, thus to guide and lead the way for the members of the society from early years.

Social ideals today can be defined mainly in terms of this rebuilding, reconstructing order out of disorder, peace out of conflict, happiness out of discontent. They lose themselves when they attempt to plaster up the cracks in the old walls, bolster up broken-down props and in generally trying to white-wash the obviously unwashable black spots. Similarly while carrying over and preserving the old heritage, humanity needs to build a new social order upon new foundations. That is the task of education in the immediate future : to train courageous pioneers who will venture into these modern forests of chaos, hew new paths, and rally all members of society to co-operate in a common structure in which man's potentialities and the benefits of scientific knowledge would have full play.

Logically, therefore, if one of our main aims is to create wholesome attitudes towards life in order to establish harmonious and happy social relationships, it is necessary to make the child assimilate the more abiding values, ideologies, thoughts and actions



which make for a larger and fuller individual life, and a richer and finely adjusted social organism. In short impart a philosophy of life, a spiritual foundation on which to build, a rod with which to measure ; for in proportion to its adherence to this, will its purpose and function in life be evaluated. Happiness may, therefore, be interpreted as the realisation of this ideal or philosophy. The closer the individual's approach to it, the greater will be the sense of fulfilment and the higher the sense of satisfaction. In the very striving is the zest of existence, the purpose which imparts a meaningful emphasis to life and lends it depth and stability.

Education is one of the social processes by means of which the individual is prepared to fit into a complicated group pattern, wherein he may find a place that would best enable him to make his cultural contribution to the group and in return draw the warmth and satisfaction that comes of human contact and intimate relationships.

As long as society remained simple, the task was easy, for relationships were direct. But as society has grown more complex, the task has become heavier, relationships more deviated. No more can the old attitudes be passed on to the young as tools of craftsmanship were once handed down from generation to generation. Nor can a young growing life be modelled upon the older. For thought-modes change as the technique of living changes. The old convention of apprenticing the young to the old, and of using education as the social agency for conservation and transmission in order to ensure the survival and stability of society, need very considerable modifications now. Something much more than mere conservation becomes essential, that is, a definite provision for adaptation to the changing demands that grow out of rapidly altering conditions. In other words, there arises the vital need for a new sense of values, a re-orientation of moral attitudes in life.

At no time has this task been beset with so many difficulties as at the present moment, with the growing conflict between the old order and the new, between the individual and the group, between man and woman.

The quality which lends the highest moral value to life is freedom. This ideal has haunted man since the dawn of history. Freedom is the essence of life, and living is but the opportunity

for the fullest development and expression of an individual's gifts and talents, which alone can make for the completest growth of his or her personality. Only freedom can create and maintain an environment conducive to this. For where the individual's natural expression is thwarted, the frustrated element forges subterranean passages and takes on anti-social forms. The highest function of education is to encourage the urge towards freedom. Where it seeks to put the lid on, the moral balance is bound to be upset, for while the mind and heart give allegiance to the ideal of freedom, the lips will be giving service to the authority which thwarts this very natural urge. This immediately creates a state of tension, mental reservations that falsify relationships, and a perpetual haunting by a sense of guilt at having let down the ideal and stemmed life's very impulse. But the attainment of the ideal is impossible unless the teachers are themselves free, free through experience, and a comprehension of their responsibilities through a professional training for freedom. For the object of education should be to determine not merely the type of society, but also the aim of life ; hence the overwhelming need for spiritual values to provide the necessary guidance.

Contemplation of ideals without the opportunity to realise them necessarily leads to spiritual frustration. It is therefore as essential for educators to impart ways and means of implementing the ideals placed before the pupils, as it is to impart methods of working out material formulæ. So much of the disillusionment and cynicism among the youth comes of this bankruptcy of the professionals to implement ideals, the complete divorce between the copy-book maxims, the slogans given by the leaders, and the actual paths along which they are ultimately forced by so-called exigencies. Today, systems of ideas, ideals, skill, information, are inculcated in such a way as to give little or no help to adjust the gap between the ideal and its attainment. The classics, fine arts, sciences, philosophy, history, carry profound values for ennobling the present and improving the future only when respect for one's culture and intellectual ability becomes a real experience. That is completely undermined in a politically subject people, and long-exploited masses and our youth suffer from this severe handicap. That self-respect has to be restored. But self-respect comes from

self-confidence, which is but a by-product of freedom. Without this basic moral foundation, all else becomes insecure, unreal. Hence the powerful cry for freedom.

Rising direct out of this is the isolation of the intellectual activities from the field of production and exchange, and the manifold inter-relationships these involve. Today, culture is regarded as a delicate hot-house plant which can thrive only in solemn isolation under careful shelter, far removed from the harsh din of the struggle for existence. This has also upset the moral equilibrium because unless our intellectual, ethical and aesthetic ideals are grounded and correlated to every phase of our economic and material existence, our moral values get confused, become irrelevant and illogical. Whilst we insist on our right to things of beauty and comfort, we rarely assume any conscious responsibility as to how those things are produced, by what immoral methods, sweating, child labour, ugly conditions of work, exploitation, and a whole train of human degradations and sorrow. Even where one has knowledge, the social conscience is lacking. Some explain it away as irrationality of historic forces, others as inevitable human nature, entirely ignoring the fact that human beings are the product of a group (society), and the environment it provides. The sharpening of the social awareness is a process generated by the interaction between the child and the society and the surroundings provided for it. The educators assume no responsibility for it; and only shut the door of their splendid ivory tower the tighter.

"The cash-nexus of our culture, its pecuniary-mindedness, subordinates all other values and functions to the pecuniary where it does not completely suppress them. Thus our medical profession finds the pecuniary interests of its leaders in direct conflict with the interests and needs of the profession generally, and its broader functional role. Engineers and technicians, educators and other professionals find their acquisitive interests in direct conflict with their occupational functions. In short, the almost exclusive preoccupation with the pecuniary aspect and relationship of occupations tends to rigidify their functions and to destroy their proper and necessary articulation with one another," comments a well-known educationist

.. In the new society which is struggling to be born, if culture is to be a vigorous and progressive moral force, it is necessary to maintain properly balanced relationships between the different functional fields of life, and make culture an element of common linkage in the total process of daily life.

The present condition of society all the world over is beginning to worry the thinking sections. Some of this is sensed in the new literature that is coming out. Victor Gollancz's *Our Threatened Values* is typical of this wherein he says : " At the crucial moment it will not be paper constitutions that men and women will obey ; they will obey their own nature, such as it has become . . . means and not ends are the effective reality ; behaviour, not the reason for it, is socially decisive. . . ." Incidentally he lays the blame for it at the doors of the interpreters of Marxism ; he says : " Marx's insistence on materialism in the technical sense, an insistence prompted by a passion to liberate personality, has been a potent factor in the spread of materialism in the popular sense and in the growth of contempt for the very personality that Marx desired to liberate." Lenin carried it a step forward in that passionate urge for the ideal society, whose protection seemed to him so crucial that any method that might contribute to the absolute power—even if it be dictatorship—seemed not only necessary but a duty. Today not only Russia but the whole world is reaping its fruit because of the use of that same technique by the communists in every country.

Up to the advent of Nazism, moral values were never openly abrogated although wide disparities yawned between precept and practice. Slogans and high-sounding catches that fell so gracefully from lips found no echo in action. Fascism however paid scant courtesy to niceties. They made a high cult of brutality and a philosophy of totalitarianism. Although the danger of fascist tendencies is not quite lost, it stands generally discredited ; more because the countries which openly practised fascism sustained heavy defeats in the last war. But the Communist Party still continues to exercise its influence, especially on the young minds, by its ruthless " short-cuts " to achievement. The youth of our country have been considerably exercised by this quality, unaware of its grave implications. It has therefore become doubly

imperative to reiterate moral values although in new terms, to remind ourselves just as much as our youth, that certain standards must continue to remain like faithful gate-posts to sustain that abiding quality in our body politic which lends meaning to our achievement. For we see only too well from experience that tacking an ism onto a state, does not automatically make that state assume the qualities indicated by the ism. Nor is it the mere economics that make, for instance, a state socialistic ; it is much more the entire nature of the structure and its capacity for treating the citizens as free human beings. For where a socialist state is not at the same time liberal and democratic, it is bound to become exploitative and oppressive, not perhaps in the old conventional sense but in a different yet real way.

The moral issues of our day are necessarily concerned with the conflict between those who stand for what are recognised as permanent values such as liberty, tolerance, respect for the human personality and those who pooh-pooch them as bourgeois decadency. It is human experience that no society can hold together without some such cementing ties. At the same time one has also to realise that one cannot rigidly adhere to forms where the content has been radically altered or the form is out of focus in a newly altered situation. Where the society is under quick transformation as at the present moment, the relative value of some of the old codes are bound to be affected, nay, sometimes what was once commended as virtue may now be condemned as an undesirable quality, such as, for instance, meekness and humility which Christianity extolled and managed thereby to keep the toiling masses in bondage. These qualities may be intrinsically all right but in their social application have been so grossly abused that unpleasant associations have sprung up around them. In their place new virtues or rather old concepts with new orientations are being substituted, such as that of thrift and industry, which generally take their colour from their setting. For thrift in a prosperous society would be miserliness, just as industry in the sense of driving large sections of society to exhaustion to keep a handful in comparative idleness and comfort, would be immoral. In the same way those based on excessive concern with individual rectitude need reorienting in the direction of

general social responsibility. Accumulation of private property, desirable in the highly insecure state of capitalistic society, would be a crime in the socialist state.

The fluidity of codes does not, however, mean that social institutions, customs and laws are to be disregarded or despised and we are to carry on from hour to hour or day to day on short-lived codes devised for each occasion ; nor can it mean that because life is an unending chain of revolutions, one is only justified in engaging oneself in revolutionary acts every moment. For creative purposes, stability and freedom from too much tension is as necessary as change, otherwise no constructive work would ever be possible. That is why mankind has from time immemorial created institutions for canalising and preserving whatever it garners and gains from time to time in the course of its ceaseless march down the long centuries. The appeal and sanction of tradition are based on this. Otherwise one would not be able to plan life according to a desired pattern with reasonable hope of its being realised. The relative stability of such a condition is called peace, so dear to the storm-tossed human heart.

In our present context of life the most dominating factor is the evaluation of moral values in relation to political life and institutions. In an increasing degree, the state is being endowed with definite and positive moral responsibilities and duties, with the gradual shift in the central focal point from the individual and the community to the state. Charity, philanthropy and the like are today given constitutional status and integrated into the normal functions of the state. There are, however, other aspects of this relationship to be considered especially where a liberal, democratic socialist state is contemplated, as opposed to authoritarian ; for while the latter calls up coercion and force, the former suggests spontaneity and agreement. Yet there can be no organised functioning without the active presence of both the elements : liberty and authority. As someone has said, liberty struggles against authority, yet desires it ; at the same time while authority checks liberty it seeks to keep it alive. Realistically speaking, in the political context force and consent are correlative. Every consent is more or less forced but the

compelling factor need not necessarily be a weapon of violence, rather one of reason and agreement, built upon convincing facts. Liberty is the complete experience of an individual of the joy of projection and expansion, which enables the personality to feel the various expressions of life in his own way and give scope to individual tendencies and activities, faculties and aptitudes, so that he can do what is satisfying to himself; while authority represents the order and regularity, the self-imposed restraints which reasoning individuals realise they owe to each other, thereby strengthening each in the collective, and, the all in one. It is to serve this that democracy is upheld, signifying the desire to give the masses importance in the shaping and deliberating of their affairs. Every form of human activity as it unfolds, takes strength from all other activities. This applies equally to politics into which come so many other aspects of human activity—for no activity is isolated. One may say, therefore, that no moral codes can be built up except through the economic and political structures. After all every citizen of a state in some measure or other puts into practice his ethical beliefs through political life. The conventional belief that politics is only machiavellianism in which moral standards have no place, has been largely exploded by men like Gandhiji whose experiment in the definition of Croce, the distinguished Italian Social Philosopher, may be interpreted as "the politics of a Saint, who in order to attain his saintly goal, availed himself of the sole means of attaining it, which were those offered him by politics." Politics is after all only a means, not an end. A real moral education must embrace political education, that is, cultivation of qualities we deem essential, that they may imbue every type of our public activity, so that sovereignty is translated into terms of duty, fear is replaced by confidence, and equality becomes not a mathematical quotient but a consciousness of our common humanity and common rights. Then the state itself ceases to convey a simple utilitarian relationship and become instead of a synthesis of force, a synthesis of culture.

The growing emphasis on the rights of the individual and the struggle towards a democratic form of society, also raises a conflict in moral concepts. This is further complicated in Indian

society—still semi-feudal in character and stamped by family authoritarianism—by a direct challenge from a rising industrial community with its new set of values. Democracy, which is a social ideal of respect for the individual, recognises and safeguards the uniqueness of each personality, affirms the individual's right to equal—not identical—opportunities for the development of his or her potentialities, believes that each has something special to contribute, and that each, while taking something away from society also puts something back. "Public education emerges from and flows into the stream of social living." These concepts no doubt militate against the "take over" from a previous age that has gone by. But if we have faith in the democratic idea as we profess to do, and believe there is morality only in intelligent consent, that coercion resting on no matter how high-sounding a motive, is unethical, then "circular response" or an integration resulting from group exploration, discussion and interpretation represents a method superior to the dictates of a single mind, and we have a moral obligation to introduce and practise its basic principles in all phases of life.

This takes as its premise the concept of dialectics, that is, development and growth through the impact of the various internal forces in continuous rise and fall, thereby enriching life by change and variety instead of stagnation and monotony. It is these waves of renovation which ennoble life and endow it with stimulation. Therefore a democratic society accepts the bonafides of these diverse currents and rather than set limits and checks, opens out the field to enable them to co-operate in "harmonious discord." The authoritarian society on the other hand distrusts opposition and spontaneous forces in conflict, believes in short-cuts to the seizure of its objective, is insensitive to the means employed, prescribes rigid regulations which can only be disobeyed at a fatal cost. It is also seen that the rise and fall of democratic groups do not lead to social deterioration or political collapse as in the case of authoritarian regimes where, as in the physical system, reactions produce frustrating crises. Rather it is a process which can be likened to the ploughing of the earth to woo a new crop out of it—a transformation which is a stimulation and a renovation.



But if creative life-forces are to inundate the narrow form of practical life and transform themselves into abundantly productive streams, the responsibility on each individual is greater than on the collective for it is the individual who after all sets the tone for the collective. The important thing is the vigour of the personality in whom the ethical ideal is deeply embedded and which he can reach for. Gandhiji has in his own quaint way characterised it as his "inner voice," which Croce describes as "nothing but the needs of history personified in individuals and they gradually assume their proper order in the maze, in the intricacy, in the struggle of individual actions gradually being translated into actuality in the manner and degree possible to them." It is therefore more realistic to put greater emphasis on the moral standards each individual conforms to, instead of their only burying themselves into a passive and neutral condition calling upon the state to change its nature.

Women have also to fight against the double standard of sexual morality that still plagues Indian society, which is another aspect of the conflict of moral ideas. The older moral codes need definite alteration. Education has a great responsibility in replacing these false evaluations of sex, which have resulted in so much injustice and discrimination against woman, by a correct analysis of the two sexes in relationship to society. Society must be brought to recognise the social division of labour between the sexes, of the truth that woman-power is basic and that she is a social and economic factor on her own, not as an assistant to man. As for her social value it cannot be measured in terms of standard weights, as society is dependent on her not only for its biological perpetuation but cultural as well, for woman is one of the most important stabilising social forces in the home and outside. Public opinion has to reorient the traditional discount attached to the female sex as a whole, and give it an intelligent, scientific and cogent value. This alone can restore the moral balance which has long been very badly tipped between the social attitudes of the two sexes and society, with all its attendant hardship to women and the infinite moral damage to society as a whole.

The time has come when the old type of moral behaviour has to be replaced by a new, when it must not be forgotten that the

young people of today are not merely heirs of the past but also the builders of tomorrow, that either spiritual values must become real and, therefore dominant, or the world be left forever to the ravages and havocs that become inevitable when economic values in terms of acquisitiveness alone prevail. The new ideal we pursue must create in each of us a new faith in a new philosophy which will teach, however paradoxical it may seem, that in the mathematics of present-day economics sharing leads to an increase in the good things of life, that plenty is maintained only when all have a share in it, that the greatest happiness of each is but a counterpart of the greatest good of all.

So man still continues to dream, hope and strive for a more human world from which exploitation and oppression, poverty, and disease will have disappeared and the state become the expression of this noble life. For moral standards become meaningful only in translating those codes in terms of everyday life—or as someone has said transform morals into politics. In this lies the salvaging of humanity from the present moral morass.

## EDUCATION AND THE NEW SOCIETY\*

**P**ERHAPS no other branch of human affairs has been treated as so exclusive a class possession as education. It seems to have about the longest tradition of being the privilege of the few. In fact so zealously and fiercely has it been guarded as a rare possession which only the elect could approach—almost a mystery cult that would have its gloss rubbed off by general handling.

The world has no doubt been changing and has travelled away from that exclusiveness so well expressed in the legend of Prometheus who was put in chains because he stole fire from the gods and gave it for the enlightenment of common humanity. Buddha revolted against an intellectual oligarchy which had made knowledge its sole prerogative, in order to restore to mankind its heritage. And although the concept that the claim to knowledge

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\* Inaugural address at the Morris College Centenary, Nagpur, December 1945.

is an essential and inherent right of man has gained ground and the target of universal knowledge is being held up as the general aim, actually the large masses of the people have hardly come into their own in this field. Even a country like England, which has a long tradition of political democracy, treated education as a class possession until barely half a century ago, the upper classes resisting every effort for universalising education. Even today what conditions are like can be best described in the words of Prof. C. E. M. Joad in an article in *World Review* : " The English have discovered that their development has hitherto been prejudiced by a double system of education, a system, which by producing a semi-feudal caste, has set its seal upon a grave social inequity. This inequity the English have decided must now stop. Throughout our history we have been as Disraeli pointed out, not one nation, but two : the educated and therefore the privileged few, and the unprivileged, because uneducated, many. We are increasingly loth to retain an educational system under which 80 per cent. leave school at the age of 14, while the remaining 20 per cent. continue to receive education until they are 18 or 20, their higher education being dependent not upon their ability to profit by it or to render service to the community because of it, but upon the size of the bank balance of their parents.

" Thus the conviction that there is something profoundly wrong with our educational system, and that it must be transformed from a double into a single system, a system which is the same for all of us is one of the most important changes the war has sponsored." Equally precise and conclusive in stigmatising the class character of that system is the speech of Arthur Greenwood in the British Parliament, introducing the recent Education Bill, when the English ruling class strenuously opposed even the raising of the school-leaving age to 16. " We had during this war developed a comradeship in war effort irrespective of social classes, and it would be out of harmony with the spirit of the nation if we perpetuated an educational system which brought a greater educational advance to the sons of the well-to-do than could be obtained by the lower sections of the community." When democratic countries can blatantly tolerate such a pronouncedly class educational structure it is inevitable that such a system

should prevail in countries under British subjection. The number of poor children who can rise to eminence in professions or public life, can be counted on the fingers. The plums of office are still largely the monopoly of the ruling classes. The portals of the public schools are still delicately protected from the contaminating breath of the toiling masses.

- These gross inequalities of educational opportunity that now obtain with the heavy weightage in favour of the richer class are only a reflection of our present social structure and the answer is to be traced to the conscious and sometimes unconscious assumptions on which our entire social order is based, which is that intelligence, talent and capacity are the property of certain socially and economically fortunately placed classes and not spread out amongst the common mankind. Therefore for the common mass it is enough if some rudimentary education is provided. Thus not only in our own country but in most countries, to a greater or lesser degree, universal education has been looked upon as some sort of philanthropic institution, shouldered by the state or charitable bodies, and any elementary instruction is found good enough, even though devoid of proper cultural amenities or material equipment. The tragic result of this dubious technique has been that vast sections of society are left in a mentally depressed state without the vigour and flavour of intellectual enrichment or cultural stimulation. And yet we have no scruples in pointing to this sad spectacle as an argument in favour of maintaining the very system which produces it. We conveniently overlook the fact that a defective education kills the source of self-expression in the youth and deprives it of that progressive ideology which alone can bring meaning to life ; for through the pursuit of an ideal it can strive to transform the dross of its frustrated life into the shining metal of fulfilment.

The same mode prevails in the working of our social organism. Man today needs not merely bread, butter and jam, he needs intellectual food as well. He alone amongst animals has developed organs of perception and feeling which crave for things other than material, that is, those that satisfy more than the mere creature needs and animal comforts. Therefore today the "good things" of life include in addition objects that satisfy

the mental cravings of man. But just as the material good things are even yet the privilege of the few, so also the goods and services which cater to the human intellect. The same callous indifference that accepts the condemnation of 90 per cent. of the people to slums, semi-starvation and social humiliation also accepts an education which is insufficient, meagre in quantity, poor in content, inadequate in equipment, backward in method and out of date in organisation. In addition it is entrusted to those who are forced to perjure themselves in calling their profession by the dignified name of "teacher," on a miserable pittance which will not assure them even a minimum human standard. For education should be judged, not by the handful who get the opportunity to unfold their talents and distinguish themselves, but rather by the maximisation of such opportunities so that the general level of the masses is raised. The true wealth of a country cannot be measured by the handfuls of brilliants that stud the terra, but the lustre of every dew-drop that glitters on every blade of grass. The true measure of the national dividend is the size and height of its humblest citizen and his cultural quotient.

Therefore the provision for universal education, not of a nominal sort like the three Rs of today but of equality, is inextricably bound up with the wider and more fundamental question of providing a better social order in which the fruits of science and industry and the advance in human thought are reaped by all and not mobilised by a few. It is impossible to bring about social justice without equality of opportunity. The inadequacy of education is due as much to governmental indifference everywhere as to the poverty of the parents. Mere free education under the current social conditions is very nearly useless, unless accompanied by adequate measures to change the existing living conditions of our young. Their home surroundings today tend to make anti-social elements out of them, rather than ennobling them to become personalities of stature. The home atmosphere is as important an influence, may be more important, as that of the school. All educationists are agreed that the early atmosphere in the life of the child is the most determining factor in its life. Therefore when we think of education we have to

think of all the forces that react on the mind of the student. To talk, therefore, of education within the existing social orbit is to camouflage under the cover of attractive words and neat sentences a tacit acquiescence in perpetuating the old social order which in essence and in form frustrates the genuine aim of education.

A child comes into the world, not like a blank slate on which the parent and teacher may write what they propose but like a seed pregnant with infinite possibilities that need to be brought out carefully with the least hurt to the child's personality. In other words, the primary function of education is to provide the necessary environment, stimulus and the vehicle of expression, which alone can help towards the fullest growth of the character of the child. Today, there is considerable controversy between acquiring knowledge and training for life, as educational objectives. There is still too much tendency to pigeon-hole life and the individual. Education is a whole continuous process and does not stand being chopped up into divisions. Society, the home, the school, and a variety of conscious and unconscious influences which constitute these various phases of life as a whole, all contribute to the growth of the child. It is only when these factors are drawn together into a complete pattern, that education can fulfil itself, that is, realise its purpose.

Education in India, whether of boys or of girls, almost more than anywhere else, suffers from certain specially severe handicaps, in that education is merely academic in the sense of its being very unrealistic, with little relationship to the thoughts or the living modes of the people. Too many irrelevant and extraneous influences have been forcibly borne down on it, so much so, that to call it education is in itself a misnomer. If the purpose is to adjust the relationship between the child and its environment, a blend of the feel and the perfume of its air, the colour of its skies, the depth of its traditions, the profundity of its background, the music of its waters, the rhythm of its winds, the cadence of its dreams, all of these factors are entirely lacking in the Indian system. Education can have purpose and meaning only if it is a sapling of the soil and embedded in the nation's bosom ; if the curriculum has a direct approach to life, and the

school-work forms a part of the environment in which the students live and have their being, and if it becomes an active factor in enriching and enlivening that environment. Only through such an approach can the growing people be brought to an understanding of the world in which they are burgeoning out, comprehend the forces they have to face and work with, and realise the significance of the issues on which they will be called upon to take decisions. Indian education is singularly free from any such essentials. It is merely a passport for a job, a means of earning one's bread, if by luck a job does materialise. Such education is like a well-worn path along which men and women move mechanically ; its moral values are vague, its spiritual springs halting, and makes life a mere drift without the rudder of an ideal. It has no philosophy—for philosophy is like a well-designed structure whose foundations go deep into the ground of ancient tradition and whose motifs are shaped out of the nation's spring-time dreams.

There is no waste in life either in magnitude or intensity than the colossal waste of human talent that goes on for want of the educative stimulant, scientific training and congenial modes of expression. Nowhere perhaps is this neglect greater than in this country where the literacy figure has not reached even a paltry 15 per cent., where a mock attempt is made to educate a child at the annual cost of Rs. 8 as against the minimum of Rs. 132 worked out by the Educational Adviser to the Government ; moreover of the 100 children that enter class I, barely five reach class V. The figures become more discouraging as they reach the higher classes.

Higher education is only a far-away dream to the larger section of the people. As K. G. Saiyidain, Director of Education in Kashmir, has pertinently pointed out in his *Educational System* : " While life is practical, pragmatic and constructive, the school is a place of bookish learning. When the child enters the school, there is an abrupt and upsetting split in his life, because of the conspicuous lack of continuity between the home and the school atmosphere. On account of its predominantly academic approach, the school fails to train its students for the practical demands of an active, social and productive life . . .

the real object of education is to enable them (students) to take their place in the community life with greater intelligence, understanding and appreciation. The ordinary run of our schools fail to achieve this not only because their curriculum is narrow and one-sided and their methods passive and unliberating but also because they lack adequate accommodation and equipment and work under such adverse material conditions that it becomes impossible to create any traditions or tastes or truly educative atmosphere in them. Many of the social and artistic aptitudes of children wither away because they never get any chance for self-expression, and the country suffers an incalculable loss of talent and creative capacity." How then can the stature of personalities or the standard of culture be raised when the people continue to dwell in a perpetual abyss of dark insecurity that stunts all creative energies? It is possible only where the minds of the people have been enabled to flower by the full utilisation of all the natural as well as acquired resources, and superstition has been made to give way to rational thought, bubbling sentiment to scientific curiosity, fear and slavishness to courage and free expression. To achieve this a widespread education of noble quality is absolutely indispensable, for that alone can bring out the best in each individual, offering the fullest scope to the diverse aptitudes so vital for the attainment of a full and satisfying life.

Even the figures we get in Governmental statistics are not for *education* but what is called *literacy*, which is but the ability to sign one's name, the criterion adopted by the census authorities. Literacy figures are therefore not even an indication of literateness, leave alone education. Therefore a mere raising of these figures becomes rather a mechanical process and not a creative radiation. For unless education is conceived with vision and imparted with imagination, it is not possible to secure an educational influence magnetic in its practical stimuli and dynamic in its social content, one that will shake the masses out of their traditional obscurantism and render them capable of assimilating the benefits of modern thought and scientific modes. If today our general public shows little enthusiasm for striking out new paths, if we have today to look to countries beyond the seas



for technicians, it is the educated society which has to bear the blame. Even with a little stimuli our people have responded with rare talent, proving that they are capable of quick assimilation of knowledge as the last war so elaborately proved. The potential talent is there and all that is needed is the proper stimulus to draw it out. For we have travelled a long way from that antiquated habit of dividing human material into clever and stupid beings. Our very conception of human talent has undergone a change. It is today recognised that every normal human being has inherent qualities that are capable of development. They vary from individual to individual in form and character. The so-called idiots are partially developed mentally ; it is for the psychologist to find out the cause which is retarding the normal growth and remove that impediment. It is due sometimes to physical causes such as under-nourishment or more often to the deadening effect of the social atmosphere from which the children spring. In either event it is capable of being remedied. In any case there is hardly an instance of a child which has not some faculty or other, active or latent, which is capable of development.

We now see that education is a part of society. It is therefore the sociological side of education that is the link between the educational centre and the wider world beyond and therefore the most important. It is the link between theory and practice ; moreover the sociological factor is implicit in the very fact of a number of individuals congregating together for a definite purpose. This inter-relationship is in itself of immense importance. It is an old accepted belief which educational experts today confirm, that the first few years of a child's life are the most significant as they set the basic pattern for its later life to come—and all that comes later usually does no more than deepen and crystallise the impressions of the earlier years.

Those social qualities that make for the maximum of harmonious adjustment between various members of society, and between the individual and society, are to be developed as part of the social training in education. It is the codes which are worked out for this purpose that form the core of social morals. Social training has therefore to be an integral part of any real education, and it

should address itself to intelligent and purposeful cultivation of these qualities so that the budding minds are encouraged to conform to the social standards with a conscious sense of responsibility, not because of blind fear or coercion. Now this training cannot be determined by preaching the Gita or the Quran or the Bible ; it has to be evolved in reference to the nature of the actual social order either in existence or the one which should be brought into existence.

Let us now briefly glance at some of the basic social problems we have to grapple with : securing a decent human standard of living for all ; social security ; elimination of unemployment, co-operative enterprise. If the aim of education be fearless rational enquiry and the courage to try to apply moral standards to the existing social order, that is, be positive in its sociological teaching, then it must see that the process of change has wrought in our society conditions to which even the most elementary standards of reason and morality can no longer be applied. Equally if education stands for a sincere vision and an honest approach to the solution of social problems, then it must realise that for it to be content with existing things is to pervert its mission, and on the contrary if it is to fulfil its purpose, it must bend its efforts to the construction of a new society which will answer to the three main qualities that are indispensable, for in our conception of a moral social order, it should be classless, co-operative, democratic. The first proposes abolition of the rigid stratification of society which impedes progressive movement ; the second envisages what must logically follow from the first, the end of exploitation of one class by another, production and distribution being regulated, not for private profit but to meet the essential needs of mankind ; the third is the mode of functioning which is only possible in a socialised society as just described. It has long been realised that for the proper working of a democracy, universal education is absolutely indispensable. But it is necessary to qualify that education by adding "social education." For once education realises its mission as training for citizenship of a society answering to the three above-mentioned minimum qualifications, then naturally and inevitably all aspects of the school and college work have to be planned to further these

objectives : organisation, method of instruction, curriculum. It must cultivate in the pupils a co-operative way of thinking and a socialised technique of living. Unless all the forces which influence a student's life are so re-oriented, the new conception cannot become an actual experience. It is only such a definite socialised directive that can open up to the young minds a picture of the main social forces that mould our life, and make them appreciate the significance of each social phenomenon. In the same way the co-operative method teaches them to appreciate the importance of group work in dealing with constructive projects and attacking intricate problems, the joy of community achievement as against individual, competitive triumph, and the like. All this is not mere idle platitude, it is the actual experience of those who have attempted training youth in a well-planned social environment and seen them acquire a high quality of socialised behaviour. Today society has stultified itself by condemning vast millions to ignorance and poverty—for one means the other, the two moving in a vicious circle ; and from this unholy premise we blatantly proceed to conclude that human nature is innately selfish and exploiting. We have first to ask ourselves, what chance has humanity been given ? It is for education to provide that chance. It is the sports field to toughen, sharpen and sensitise the social faculties of man. It is the innate right, therefore, of every student to be faithfully taught why unemployment exists and how to build a system from which it will be eliminated. The solution for the present educational ills does not lie in maintaining slum and drab rural schools for the vast masses, side by side with luxury schools charging fabulous fees for the elite, which on the contrary only accentuate the social divisions of society. The remedy lies, as we have seen, in wiping out the yawning gulf between manual labour and intellectual study, between city and rural schools, by introducing an all-inclusive national system which will cater to the *psychological aptitude* of each child and not to its *financial status* ; maintaining practical, constructive and creative activities, in which manual work finds as honoured a place as mental, for in a way it provides greater scope for co-operative endeavour and incidentally develops keener social kinship than bookwork ; giving the city and the rural children ample opportunities to gain

experience and get familiar with each other's environment so that the existing artificial remoteness which isolates one from the other and prevents a strongly integrated society may be broken, and a strong bond of communal unity forged instead ; for the expansion of one's normal environment logically expands one's vision and knowledge. In such a context discipline is found to be more readily self-imposed, out of an awareness of one's social responsibilities which are necessary incidents of an organised community life. Therefore, where an educational institution is organised as a social community, the realisation must grow on the students through trial and experience that while freedom is a necessary condition of discipline, even so, discipline is an equally necessary condition to the full realisation of freedom in a corporate life.

## A SOCIAL EVALUATION OF ART

**A**RT in the ancient human society was a social expression. It expressed, not the mood or the idiosyncrasy of an individual but rather the social consciousness of the community as a whole. Art was not a luxury, an exclusive commodity on sale to become the sole possession of the highest bidder, but the normal everyday detail of life. The artist was not an alien being, looked upon as a freak, living outside the pale of the common herd, employing a strange language and flaunting a mode of living in deliberate defiance of the normal accepted social code and pattern, as artists like doing these days. The artist of those days was a social fellow-being, for the entire community lived in close touch with the beauty which became woven into every social commodity, be it the humblest, the commonest article, the tiniest detail ; each was elaborated with loving and aesthetic precision. In fact, every man and woman was an artist in his or her own way, and each created out of the joy of giving shape and form to dreams and inspirations. The woman's deft fingers as she drew designs in white or coloured powder in her yard, the dishes she cooked, the flowers she strung, expressed the innate creative genius. Every craftsman was an artist ; every cloth he

wove, every image he chiselled, every piece of pottery he moulded, was a perfection of colour, harmony and rhythmic balance. A wealth of care and imagination went into the making of the most mundane and insignificant of articles, be it a churner, a rolling-pin or a kitchen mat. Art meant loveliness of form, balance and proportion pervading every single detail. One lived, breathed and fed upon art, for art was an essential part of life, more, a necessity like bread and love and home. Moreover all the arts rubbed shoulders and formed a common fraternity. Their greatness lay in being the simple and loving expression of a common humanity and its life. Big works of art, such as public buildings, places of worship, ornamental objects for beautifying the city, were a community responsibility in the execution of which it participated and co-operated, making each its collective expression.

But life was simpler then. It revolved chiefly round small-community, self-sufficiency economy, when needs were simpler, living harder, and the complexities of the present-day economy had not yet come with their varied sophistications. The artist then held a fairly defined place in society for art was still regarded as a practical craft—something essential to the community needs and satisfied that urge, and not as a leisure hour hobby of the rich who alone can sport it today as a privilege.

But competitive society altered all that. It isolated the artist, throwing him upon himself, facing the public, not one of its servicemen. Gradually he found himself become a tradesman selling his works as wares to those who could afford to buy them. He connoted for the first time a private luxury article with no community or social importance, and more or less having to cater to the tastes of the patron or starve. This has naturally not only suppressed the creative freedom of the artist but has also served to isolate him gradually from the people, which means also isolation from reality. The idiosyncrasies of cultural expressions the frustrated spirit of the artist resorts to, and which decadent society sometimes welcomes for its sheer novelty, are a symptom of the hiatus between community life and its true expression. It is an art of despair, not life which society must take as a serious warning. The evidences of waste and frustra-

tion are as obvious in the cultural field today as in the material. Just as the quantity of material production is determined by the necessities of private profit and not by the volume of human needs, similarly the nature and strength of cultural production is equally determined by financial factors, whether in the matter of the human element or formal technique. Even where a higher standard may be attained, the character of culture is debased in a society run under the influence of monopoly interests. In such a society opportunities are limited to the few ; which means that a large part of society is prevented from giving its best to society. As it has been said, the Promethean fire is being used to stoke up the furnaces of private profit. Intellectual workers in all fields should beware of this frustration of their powers, the falsification of values and the absence of a unifying synthetic spirit. One can only quote the indictment of capitalism by the Poet that " It has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honoured and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the philosopher, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the scientist, into paid wage labourers."

At no time was art so isolated and therefore shorn of its real vitality as in recent decades, especially after the advent of modern industrialisation. Gradually the isolation spread. Paintings moved away from public walls, statues from monuments and places of public worship to private mansions, to be retransformed into individual portraits and figures of private patrons, who now secured for exclusive use what was for centuries public property. Slowly and inevitably public buildings and monuments lost touch with art and became loud symbols of wealth. The new society had no taste and little of community consciousness, for it symbolised individual success, the man who had won the race in commercial competition leaving the others behind, perhaps rudely pushing them back and even trampling on them. Competitive society has little time or mind for aesthetic pursuits. Today where art objects and their patronage have become a mark of wealth, usually experts are hired to deal with them. For such objects too are an investment and often represent wealth that escapes State taxes. It is rarely, and more by accident, that money goes hand in hand with love of beauty.

It was but natural that this degradation of art should lead to the banishment of the artist from the common fold, label his natural instinct as a strange freak that troubles the emotions of a few who henceforth would be best outside the high fence of "respectability," to dwell on cagey fringes to be only tolerated, misunderstood, for ever suspect, despised, and, worst of all, mostly ignored. "The history of Art in the nineteenth century," writes Roger Fry, "is the history of a band of heroic Ishmaelites, with no secure place in the social system, with nothing to support them in the unequal struggle but the dim sense of a new idea, the idea of the freedom of art from all trammels and tyrannies. . . ."

Art cannot live by the artist working for another for the sake of patronage. Art expression has to be allowed to find its own natural channels by the artist working under the pressure of his creative urge. It is only in this way that art can serve humanity, for then alone can it fulfil its function. It is when such natural expression is thwarted that artists, to record their protest against a blind society and age, indulge in excesses, freakish clothes, daring unconventionality, and the like. They are but pitiful devices the artists weave in their solitude, when relegated to the outer margins of life.

Artists are after all only men and members of society, open to the influences of the society in which they live ; and it is their ideas, feelings and attitude towards the problems of life which really go into the works they create. An artist does not cease to be a man and become a productive machine, functioning detached from the vortex of human affairs. Therefore all art expressions have to be considered in human and social terms. The artist inevitably projects into his creations his own personality with varying degrees of directness or indirectness which is but the sum total of his attitude towards life itself. The subject of his treatment is no accident but an indication of his mental outlook and his emotional affinities, which are but his sociological expressions. Therefore to talk of art as an isolated factor entirely cut off from the other serious activities of life, is unreal. If art is as vital as we feel it is, then it is bound to be closely related to all those other factors which are important in our life,

We realise that every human being is a product of the society and its environment. The form and content of cultural expression of any given period can therefore be explained only in social terms, whether that expression be literary, musical or pictorial. In other words the creative force takes shape with the clicking of two currents, the individual trends and the social. The dynamic is lent to the situation by the powerful impact of these two on one another.

The few artists who have refused to be isolated, and maintained their links with the people and their sensitiveness to reality, have not needed to resort to any of the evasions. For inevitably as the struggle of the social forces grows more dominant, those who slip behind the curtain of isolation instead of sharing in the most dynamic and important of functions—the social revolution society goes through from time to time—are bound to devise or resort to an escape of mechanism of some kind, which is but the subconscious urge in him to find a compensation for losing the reality. One of the greatest services rendered by the Mexican Revolution to the painters, was to break through the vicious circle of private patronage and establish State patronage, to enable the artists to maintain their links with the community and not only with individuals who patronise.

Therefore art can only have meaning and influence where it is vitally linked to the normal currents of the social life of the period and is able to assume a clearly defined collective function. Otherwise it remains outside of the social hum and web. The existing gap can only be bridged by restoring beauty to its central pivotal place, whereby it endows the common threads of daily existence and the mundane details of ordinary life with uniqueness and originality. One sees today attempts to bring art to the common man by indulging in loose phrases like "Proletarian Art." This merely betrays a mind incapable of thought or action free from sectarian bias. For such symbolic slogans as "Proletarian Art" inject once more into a community-possession the sectarian virus and start just another process of poisoning instead of pumping out the existing sectarianism, and restoring to the entire community its precious lost legacy.

Just as a social revolutionary change has to come out of the



giant stirrings of the entire strata that have been made inane and dumb through centuries of suppression, so, too, its varied expressions must surge up from its moving breast. It is not to be imposed from above as a gift of benevolence or political act. It is not uncommon to find cultural expressions being exploited for sectarian and factional propaganda in the name of the people, while in reality toeing what is called the "Party line." It is not an attempt to rouse and organise the burning lava sizzling in the breasts of the vast masses, but just to bolster up a certain political group or party through the negative process of undermining the existing bourgeois standards. The aim should be to create conditions for the masses to fashion their own instrument of expression. It has to be the manifestation of life, not of a political idea or party organ. For we must realise the fundamental fact that art is the appeal to the instinct of communion, the indivisible unity of mankind. We recognise each other with a growing awareness of our oneness by the echoes beauty awakens in us. "Intuition is only a flame spurting forth at the point of contact of an infinity of previous analysis and of accumulated reasoning. . . . There is no hero of art who is not at the same time a hero of knowledge and of the human heart," so says Elie Faure, the French poet and art critic. Art enables man to penetrate deeper than science. Within the heart of the artist are the earth, the vast spaces, all that lives and moves, even the tissues of the stone which to the naked eye seems inert. How much more truly and intensely he must feel the emotions, the passions, the joys, and hopes, the despairs and sorrows, of those made in his own image. The artist is not sufficient unto himself—if he believes that he is no artist. The very language an artist employs is universal. It overleaps all narrow boundaries and divisions. Art enables man to penetrate into the very core of existence, and pierce the social structure. Thus can man see himself as well as the entire social fabric he has woven, even as a woodland mirrored in a clear surface of water, when all the intricacies of foliage are disentangled and finely posed. He who wants to create cannot do so unless he feels within himself all the flow and pattern of the social life; is consumed by the flames raging in the hearts of all men, those who have passed beyond

and those yet to draw their breath ; is able to capture abstract ideals and raise them to the plane of laws which determine the everyday relationship of man to man. It is this quality alone which enables art to make of life a perfect whole. For each fragment of the work, because it is adapted to the entire whole, however humble in itself, extends as though in silent echoes and invisible strands, throughout the deepened breadth, to weave the complete pattern. Therefore a great work of art lives even in the least of its fragments.

Culture is an imaginative reflection of life, and since life is not static, adhering to realism in art does not mean photographic naturalism ; for that would not reflect the fundamental realities of life which do not come to the surface except through scientific penetration and historical perspective. A rubber-stamp realism conveys no impression of either the weight of the past or the possibilities of the future or the dynamics at work beneath the surface of life. For the one who creates has to reveal not a static present but the future which is already getting shaped in the vortex of the present currents. A work of art is true in so far as it not only reflects faithfully the thoughts and feelings of the time but also survives the test of practical experience. For a theory or idea is true only in so far as it can be made meaningful in action.

If art is to give expression to each particular age, it must break loose from the frontiers of a bygone age and shake off the limitations of the old imaginative and mental make-up. Life is a continuous flow. Its tempo is accelerated during the process of a revolution when changes are more rapid and radical. At such a time social necessity compels advance trends in culture and a loosening of the old roots, which creates a conflict between the old pattern and the new struggling to be born. The protagonists of the old culture who fear changes, in a desperate attempt to maintain the *status quo*, declare themselves as the guardians of morality and civilisation to stave off the new oncoming tide, while the advocates of transformation cannot but defy the old standards and codes. For every stage of social change calls for a cultural form that expresses its own needs, as the old which a past age had created can no longer utilise the new forces or

techniques or reflect the new ideals in its content. In this struggle, the defenders of the old culture resort to uncultured and even barbaric methods which they had themselves once despised and condemned. For, when a force ceases to be progressive it becomes repressive. It is the new society which alone can provide the artists scope for the fullest development in every department of culture and science.

Today the synthesis of life is broken by a disorganised society in which each branch of activity is isolated from the other, the philosopher from the scientist, the artist from the engineer and each and all from the massive web of a great pulsating indivisible life, in which each is a vital supporting factor adding to the balance, beauty and contours of the total. For instance, it is time even the mechanised machine ceased to be regarded merely in terms of rigid geometrical contours, a generator of murky air and smokes, static without passion, and came to be assimilated as easily and simply and as profoundly as the landscape below and the firmament above ; mastered and made to live as heroically and movingly as the ancient tales of historical narratives. Machines have today become extensions of man's limbs. They portray the power man has come to establish over the forces of nature, his conquest of the elements. This tussle is as old as man himself. The struggle is full of beauty, rhythm, music, colour. If man in his weakness has allowed the machine to master him, it is not the fault of the machine which is but a creature of man, to be made and destroyed by him. One may as well censure appetite itself, for it often overpowers man. The radio is only an amplification of man's lungs, the telephone of his ears. To frown upon the aeroplane and sing of the creaking country-cart, is not even poetic justice. It is sheer conservative sectarianism. The plough was as outlandish an innovation once as the tractor is today. To ignore man's inexhaustible genius for forging new implements is to ignore the very laws of social change, and no true artist can afford to do that. "An artist produces more as a biological function," says Rivera Diego, the great Mexican artist, "just as a tree produces flowers and fruit nor mourns their loss each year, knowing that the next season it shall blossom and bear fruit again." Art should express not

merely what is but also what might be, not the diluted average but the concentrated aspiration, not the sheer discouraging defeats but much more the transforming possibilities. All aspects of art expression must embrace and portray vitally the ambitions, hopes and struggles of humanity, must universalise figures to make them symbols of vast vision and action ; give them that broad human significance which must fully rouse and rally the community's interest. Art has to be like a free, large building, where men and women can congregate and feel their communal oneness, their large physical and social unity. It must be public in its function, and though integrated to a social structure, yet prepared for the most sweeping social changes.

## SEX AND SOCIAL STRUGGLE\*

**T**HOSE who oppose change and fear upheavals in society invariably plead and fight in the name of social morals. It is the common impression that revolutions make for laxity in morals, and much of the prejudice against Russia in the early days was that it had abandoned all morality.

This raises the all-important question of Sex and Social Struggle and the interdependence of the two. We are a little too inclined to delude ourselves with the idea that sexual morality has been an unbroken tradition of one continuous type and that it has moulded and guided social behaviour. Whereas history shows that sex, though a profound force in human life, has not determined social or economic development. On the contrary it has been determined by the social and economic factors, and sexual ethics have, therefore, varied and oscillated from age to age. Thus the morality of one age which seemed a lasting attribute of that civilisation goes into disintegration and disappears in another. And what was once regarded as immoral takes on a garb of morality. But the key to these charges becomes intelligible only when one adopts the method of historical analysis and discovers that the attitude towards sex and our conception of sexual morality, is determined by the nature of society and is not the result of

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\* *Congress Socialist*, April 1936.

divine revelations, because all social behaviour is the outcome of economic and social environment.

Primitive man with his simple social existence and a direct uncomplicated economic system has a natural attitude of candour towards sex. Woman shares his labour with him and is a definite economic unit in that society. But with the rise of private property, of large kingdoms, of imperial expansions, the present mode of "civilisation" steps in. The ruling classes grow less rigid in their habits, whatever the codes on paper may be. The wealth in their possession and the power in their hands give them security and protection from the consequences of transgression. Thus economic extravagance and sexual excesses invariably go together in spite of the traditional idea of the "respectability" of the upper classes. The morality or severer conduct of the poor has at the basis more the economic stringency, hard labour and harsher conditions of living. The comparison and contrast between the two can be made largely by the measure of economic rather than ethical values. This has also determined the position of women in the respective societies, for while the leisured class degraded the woman of its own class by rendering her helpless and depriving her of her economic and social rights, it degraded the woman of the working class by dispossessing and disinheriting the entire class as a whole. Too little work, even as too much, has contributed to the downfall of woman.

Economic competency determines social practices more than moral codes. In all Eastern countries including Turkey, though polygamy was permitted, it was only the richer classes that could indulge in this expensive luxury. The richer the man, the larger the number of wives, while the vast majority is forced to live in monogamy. Polygamy is, therefore, rare in very primitive society. It only appears along with the institution of private property. Male supremacy is implicit in this and marks the pathetic transformation of woman into man's private property. The right of divorce is denied to her, for marriage is no more a matter of mutual consent. Private possession is the red seal stamped on the whole institution.

Under feudalism the right of marriage is denied to the plebeians and especially to the slaves. It is a distinct class privi-

lege. Even today, tenants tied to feudal landlords are obliged to obtain the master's consent to marry their children; similar conditions prevail amongst plantation labour as well. The sex life of the owned is at the mercy of the owner's whim. Even when they have children, they are the owner's property. Women are sold and valued or given away as gifts. The bourgeois class which rises in challenge to the decaying aristocracy is inevitably more continent. A rebel class fighting for its rights and its existence must necessarily be severely disciplined and stricter in conduct. We see this best illustrated in the rise of puritanism in England and the successful struggle of the middle class against a degenerate king and his feudal lords. Those respectable moral codes which are a fiction with the aristocracy become a necessary reality with the middle class. Thriftiness of habit and laxity in conduct are social incongruities. Romance, the luxury of the few rich, has no place in the harsh struggle of a rising rebel class. And religion lends itself easily to serve the ruling class. Its holy sanctions are forged to safeguard the social privileges and the economic stability of that class. Therefore religion is inclined to taboo the new morality and frown on a new order that threatens the present class-society.

In the Western countries where this conflict between the two classes—the aristocratic and the middle-class—has been sharper and more marked, the sex taboos have been stricter and more elaborate. In the Eastern countries semi-feudalistic conditions still exist and they are comparatively more free from the silly pruderies of the puritanism of the middle class. In the West prudery was greatly accentuated by the unnatural attitude of Christianity towards sex. Christianity was the expression of an oppressed class in its revolt against its tyrannical rulers. It embodied its reactions and resentful scorn of all the looseness of the Roman upper classes. Adherence to a new code, a new morality, was implicit in such a struggle and its strength could be measured to a large extent by the standard of self-denial it practised. Voluntary suffering became its philosophy, martyrdom its crowning achievement. Simplicity, self-denial and continence are the usual features of all great struggles throughout history. Fighting and suffering for a cause demands a higher standard of conduct.

One saw signs of these values colouring our vision in India in our Freedom Movement. But to understand the fanaticism of the rebel few in the dawn of Christianity we have to visualise the demoralised society of Rome and the swing it gave to the social conduct of the oppressed rebel community. Woman becomes thus the cause of sin, for sex is unclean. It must be hidden, suppressed, tabooed. To escape and forget it men turn to the lures of the other world. To stifle its incessant call they lacerate themselves. But conventions that disregard the nature of the fundamental urges in man, such as sex, cannot endure long. They sow within themselves the seed of destruction. The rise of the modern age of science, machine and industry deals it the last death-blow.

In the Eastern countries the evolution of social and economic forms has tended to give rise more to philosophical schools of thought than to rigid sectarianism. In India where nature has been bounteous and kindly, man has had to struggle less. He had more time for intellectual speculation. Asceticism is not upheld as superior to normal sex life. Man only renounced the world after he had had his fuller life. The attitude towards sex is natural and free from silly pruderies. Our ancient books show clearly the various changes social ethics passed through down the long centuries. Polygamy and polyandry both existed and vestiges of them are seen even today. There is an amazing amount of "laxity" in sex conduct right from the gods down to the commonest man. Every page thrills with coloured romance and the lures and the delights of sex are accepted as an art of life, side by side with the commendation of the austerer life. But while the latter is very restricted, the former is general and universal. It is the period of the rise of pastoral kingdoms and shows the wide prosperity of the conquering Aryans as they with ease expand their Empire. The reformist movement, organised by the social rebel elements such as the Buddhists and Jains, tries once again to enforce rigidity and a severer standard of conduct. Asceticism is at a high count with them and the monastic order one of their chief features.

But the rise of Aryan Imperialism and the rich leisured upper class works in the same manner as elsewhere, for the downfall of

woman. She is already man's private property. Husband worship is her *dharma* and all her social behaviour is judged by that one measure. The more submissive she is, the greater her merit and virtue. She has no existence or significance apart from man. Imperialistic needs create a new set of social tenets to meet its ends. Large families are essential and so woman is blessed with the wish that she may bear eight sons—symbolic of her value to society, not as a reproductive machine but mainly for *male* offspring. The Imperial State needs men, and more men. A woman who can't fulfil this function can be discarded by the husband though today science teaches us that the responsibility for barrenness in a couple may be as much with the man as with the woman. But in a civilisation of male supremacy woman alone is held responsible for all such failures. A widow is of no use to such a society or State, for it is the male counterpart that counts for without him she can have no progeny and the emphasis is all on reproduction. Minus him, she becomes an object of abhorrence and ill luck—an outcast in society. In the newly-rising Fascist society fired by inordinate dreams of world conquest, similar codes are being instituted.

The economic basis of society undergoes a radical upheaval and its social composition changes with the advent of industrialism. Its entire construction is recast, creating a wholly new social order. The old sanctions are broken and everywhere is bewilderment and chaos. New standards, new ethics, new attitudes towards sex, woman and the emotional relationship between man and woman are struggling to rise. Conservatism still stands for the old order. Religion still clings to its old sanctions. But the social order under the hammer blows of new economics is rapidly wiping the old tracings, full of vigour and defiance. Old superstitions are being buried under the new structure of a scientific industrial age. And, therefore, men and women are caught bewildered in this cruel vortex. They are impeded instead of being helped to adjust themselves to the swiftly changing scenes and thus become its sad victims. The pathology of such an age of contradictions is bound to be neurotic.

But this neurosis and sex complexes cannot be cured by mere inner analytical processes. The causes are as much external as



internal and much deeper than mere sex. For a human being to be normal, he must have healthy conditions of living, opportunities for physical and mental growth, facilities for cultural expression, economic and national security—which once again brings us to our original contention that social codes are predominantly dependent on the economic basis and social structure of society. The emphasis on sex suppression is the result of centuries of repressions and false standards and values. The basic problem is social and has to be treated as such. Psychology must cease to be merely individualistic and become a social philosophy as well. It is in developing a social order on scientific and human lines and restoring to man and woman their pristine dignity that a balanced society of normal men and women can be established.

### GOALS OF SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION\*

THE most powerful impulse in man is to live. But man is not content merely to live. He desires to live well. Practically all human activity is determined by this, that is, the healthy functioning of those capacities of the organism, both physical and mental that are necessary for the most complete expression of the physical and spiritual potentialities of the organism. Human needs are therefore determined by those commodities and experiences that are necessary for this functioning.

Man is unique in the animal kingdom in having needs which are more than purely animal. That is where values come in, for man aims at attaining a certain standard that cannot be altogether measured by animal needs, such as hunger and sex. Man has gone beyond these cravings and developed new ones. This yearning or idealism determines the sense of values. Types of family, character of society, form of government, all these are evolved with a view to securing the most complete satisfaction and fullness of life. Man has never succeeded in this. He is forever trying out new modes on this eternal quest. That is why life is never static, and where social modes grow rigid and

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\* *Modern Review*, August 1945.

outmoded, they usually crack up under the hammer blows of the discontented elements of society and emerge in new moulds. Life can never reach a stage where the need for a change does not seem necessary.

Man fulfils his needs not by himself but through the group, which is the most important factor to bear in mind. So for this fulfilment, mankind needs to maintain a group living that reduces conflict to the minimum and augments harmony to the highest and largest measure. What we refer to categorically as human nature and human habits, are aspects we have developed over a long period by a process of deliberation to enable individuals to function in a group and as a group. No child comes into the world with all these traits just tucked in as goods in a packing case. Just as a child arrives without clothing or money, so does it come without what are known as human attitudes. These are inculcated by its environment. This "attitude" is the most dynamic element in the human living, for it determines the behaviour of each individual, and therefore is the directing force behind a society. It reflects the pattern of the social group in which it took birth and form. Thus what the group instils into the individual, the individual gives back to the group. For the attitudes are tendencies which reflect the experiences and social patterns of behaviour that condition the individual. In short it is the motive for activity. Thus a society is what it makes of each individual member. This has an important bearing on all social values, for what each regards as the value of any object or form of activity is entirely relative to the attitude of that individual. Researches in psychology are revealing more and more a startling state of affairs in the relationship between an individual and the emphasis or value attached by the individual to an object or activity. Human activity cannot therefore be measured by simple standards in societies that have grown very complex.

But in trying to understand human behaviour, we must take account of the existence of certain requirements inherent in human nature, the most obvious being the physiological needs. But psychical needs have also become almost inherent now as they form an indivisible part of the human environment, such as

family life, social recognition and status, cultivation of the mental faculties, opportunities for creative work, sense of security and the like. As these characteristics appear common to all peoples of all climes, far flung from each other, the human race in its essential mental and emotional processes appears similar, its need for the general type of activities the same ; only the methods of working them out in detail vary. These differences are the outcome of the varying environment, for culture is the product of an accommodation to environment. The attempt naturally involves or leads to invention, the road along which humanity has travelled over many ages.

We must however realise that although wants are the source of values, they are not an adequate guide. The principle humanity works upon is that the greatest happiness of the greatest number is the proper goal of all human action and the proper measure for evaluating human behaviour ; for it recognises that man attains his most complete happiness only in promoting happiness for the whole group of which he is a part. This is no academic truism but a very real experience. Happiness rises out of a sense of fulfilment, while fulfilment in turn comes from the proper and normal functioning of the essential organs.

The basis for judging the worth of a society is its efficiency for the satisfying of those human needs that make this possible. Our positive as well as our negative wants are the starting point for measuring values. For often our wants are determined, not by actually what our organism needs but rather by what the environment in which we grew up taught us to want. Sometimes these not only do not bring happiness but on the contrary draw disaster. It is therefore necessary to discriminate carefully between wants and needs, to arrive at what may be called the basic ones. This can be achieved by weighing and sifting human experiences since the dawn of history. Nor can this assertion be categorically the last word. We have yet to know much more of human nature in relation to its daily experiences before determining that.

Roughly these may be characterised as those which promote survival and longevity and those which are more abiding and lasting ; those which involve the participation of all members of

society and can be enjoyed by as many as possible and serve to knit human beings into closer and friendlier ties. These may be classified as the fundamental human needs on which the happiness of human beings rests and a society's progress measured according to the satisfaction of these conditions.

First come the physical needs, for without them no human being can function or survive. This does not mean the mere gratification of his physical hungers, but also the equally imperative need for the vital functioning of all his physical powers. The amount and variety of food, rest and sleep, proper housing, protection against poison and infection, in fact all that is needed for hygienic living, together with facilities for medical treatment, recreation, physical relaxation, and wholesome expression of sex life.

Next comes creative activity which is closely allied with physical activity and daily living. In this context it becomes essential to make man's daily task the happy expression of his creative urge, not a heavy penalty paid to earn a morsel. For just as man is not content merely to live, he is not satisfied merely to toil. He seeks to realise himself through his work. In the more highly industrialised societies, this is quite impossible, due to the very nature of the work with its minutest divisions of labour, where jobs are done "by the clock" instead of for the joy of working. This problem is closely related to several others, such as general conditions of work, working hours, standardisation, etc., which need to be discussed under the entire economic head.

In equal importance comes security. This may be defined as physical, social and economic. Man is never master of his own life or destiny. He eternally finds himself the victim of exigencies. While knowledge of protection against disease and accident has grown, so have fatalities with the rise of the modern complexities of life. In fact the achievement on the credit side as the result of increased knowledge and experience is discouragingly poor, for the advent of machinery has served to add to our physical insecurity on a scale unknown before. Thus far the measures taken by society to eliminate these menaces of the machine have been rather meagre, as compared with the tremendous toll of life and suffering that continues to be exacted.

But great as this is, man does not half so fear this as economic

insecurity. For just as modern machinery has introduced new menaces to his physical well-being, so have new sources of insecurity been introduced by the present economy. Man has become isolated from his family and community security which was a feature of the pre-industrial society. Moreover incomes today depend not upon a man's iron efforts but upon conditions beyond his control. This fear of insecurity not only serves to destroy the peace of mind of millions but does actually bring poverty, physical and mental suffering, loss of efficiency and self-respect to large sections of the population. Any future society would have to be judged by the extent to which it is freed from this menace. An unequal distribution of both wealth and opportunity as well as other benefits society has to offer, has meant an unbalanced group living together with a conflict of interests between the two groups. For ownership, distinction, wealth, power, all these go together and are today the privilege of a small section, not the recognised right of everybody. Our entire economy is ruled by competition and wealth, and economic power instead of being only the means to an end, has become the end itself. The fact is completely ignored that individual success and power is being achieved by the few, aggressive and in a position to utilise resources and instruments that in reality belong to all. Material success and the power that goes with it do not usually come as the result of some outstanding contribution to the common welfare but rather by exercising ability in the accumulation of wealth ; sometimes no efforts need to be expended even to do that as in the case of inherited wealth. The only genuine contributions to society are through scientific research and invention, and cultural creations which are rarely recognised or compensated in terms of money and power under the present system.

In its technique of functioning, the success of the few is purchased at the expense of the many. This is chiefly because the sources and the means of production are controlled by the ruling class while the rest merely labour to produce. If this is to be corrected the competitive motive needs to be replaced by the promotion of the common welfare as the end to aim at.

Man being essentially a social being, even his individual fulfil-

ment comes mainly through group life. Through the community association, he has developed certain social values ; he likes to have a special social status, win social distinction, be loved and respected by his fellow beings, enjoy their confidence and appreciation and participate in the group activity as an equal. But due to economic and social inequalities today, a very large section of society is basically denied even the most elementary opportunities for the satisfaction of these cravings. Children are reared in an atmosphere charged with inferiority ; their normal ambitions thwarted and all roads to self-development rigidly closed. A vast majority of people today are simply strangled even before they have had a sporting chance.

Knowledge and the systematic development and cultivation of his natural faculties or tendencies is another fundamental need of man. It has a twofold meaning. Knowledge is the tool with which to get the means for the satisfaction of other wants as well as for the enrichment of those experiences which it brings. Society should provide channels to children and adults alike for the pursuit of such activities. Where it does not, as our present-day society for instance, the result is universal paucity, for where society endows a child with knowledge it, as much as an adult, adds to the wealth of society, materially and intellectually. Where society fails to do so, the loss is as much to the individual as to the group.

One of the most important and significant moving forces in man is the creative urge and the need for beautiful surroundings. In a way the two may be taken as interdependent. In an acquisitive system where values are measured by material accumulation, creative work is at a disadvantage. Moreover, as the production machinery gets more and more mechanised and standardised, work gets so monotonously routine, that no creative impulse has any play, in fact it is completely thwarted in course of time.

Such a setting necessarily determines the rest of our daily environment. With the commercialisation of production, things are prepared with an eye to profit, not *use*. Hence the element of beauty is very indifferently treated not as an integral part of the whole but as an isolated factor that must be separately paid for

in high exceptional prices which are far beyond the scope of all barring only the very wealthy ones. Beauty is not a luxury, it is one of the basic essentials of life. But in a civilisation that has made even fresh air expensive, this is not to be wondered at.

In the days when man created with his own hands, he put his very soul into it. Everything he made, the tiniest, the most insignificant had to be beautiful. This was as indispensable as the material he used. Today this has been made the function of only the artist, who has thus become isolated from the people, and who produces only under special patronage, for a rare price. With the result that the cities we inhabit, the houses we live in, the transport that carries us, the articles for our daily use, have all become monuments of absolute ugliness. When the basis of our economy alters and we start producing for use, then beauty will be restored back to our life and we shall remember that man lives as much by beauty as by bread.

Our very mode of living will have to be drastically altered. Unequal distribution of population will have to be replaced by scientific distribution according to the needs of production so as to serve the community best. The present congested cities with their unnatural concentration of population, hotbeds of crime and disease, will have to disappear completely. More compact cities planned to enable the people to live as human beings in close contact with nature, open ground with trees and flowers as a part of every dwelling, and with proper facilities for a congenial community life. Under the new economy and in the new surroundings, man would have not only more leisure but the inspiration as well, to use his leisure profitably in creative hobbies and play, two of man's most essential needs that are completely suppressed in the present society. Work is never a complete or adequate expression of man's need for activity. Moreover all routine does get monotonous and tedious. Many of our muscles, nerve centres, emotions that are not brought into play in our daily lives—activities that can give expression to these suppressed parts, add a fresh zest to life and introduce the element of adventure, which is pursued for its own sake, because of the exhilaration and joy that such explorations bring.

It is clear that no fixed goals can be determined if we mean

by these a particular form of society or economic organisation. For change, we note, is an inevitable feature of life and has no final goal at which to terminate. The goals aimed at, therefore, can only mean certain qualities that inhere in social living, the inner and most lasting element which gives meaning to the outward forms even as they constantly shift and transform. In formulating social objectives our emphasis has therefore to be more on the underlying principles than on the forms of social functioning. The goal is not a perfect type of society but rather one which will fit the needs of the particular period in which we happen to be functioning, for our needs do not continue the same for decades or generations on end. This is an essential point to bear in mind. For a type of social organisation that is accepted as best for one set of circumstances will certainly not continue to be the best for another set of circumstances. Social planning must therefore seek for the functioning of social processes that will for the time best serve human needs, and our directive must be to guide these constantly flowing streams of human affairs into those channels that promise the most fruitful satisfaction of human needs for as long a period as is possible.

While, as we have noted, changes cannot and should not be averted, society can helpfully benefit by them by intelligent application and effort at guiding, and thus replace aimless drift or haphazard changes or chance incidents by deliberate and purposeful planning to control these moving forces and directing them into fruitful channels.

To begin with, a clear realisation of the amity of the various social factors from a thoroughly rationalistic angle is necessary. For instance, in dealing with problems like crime and prostitution, a scientific approach has to replace the old sentimental one; for social evils spring mainly from physical and emotional maladjustments, due to the frustration of normal human needs and not some innate wickedness as some suppose. The plan, therefore, has to be a single comprehensive one to include the various details in their relationship with one another. No social problem can be effectively dealt with isolatedly. It must be treated as a detail in the whole.

Man, we have noted, mainly fulfils himself through the group.



Through the ages the co-operative society has grown in size and strength, and the tendency is still in that direction, with a growing skill in co-operative living. From small groups and tribal units we have expanded into nations of hundreds of millions who are able to maintain a high degree of unity and solidarity. The need and urge for a world society is pressing us towards building for it. This does not mean that man's intensely individualistic and egoistic impulses have become completely attuned to the group demands. But man is coming to realise increasingly that he has better chances of survival and of gaining a constantly expanding, richer and more varied life, only in proportion to the perfection and strengthening of his qualities of co-operative living. So, to secure a sound basis for a society, it is necessary to achieve a balance and adjustment between the individual impulses and the group needs. Our living and working are so intertwined with the living and working of others, that in the very nature of the existing pattern, no one can avoid depending for his well-being on the well-being, effort and discipline of others. For there can be no welfare for a society without its being the welfare of the large masses. Nor can an individual effort be of value to society except in so far as it is conditioned by the circumstance under which it is able to function—the circumstance being of course created by the group efforts. A high standard of collective action is therefore essential for individual welfare, fulfilment and satisfaction. This has become all the more necessary in view of the prevalence of a ruthless type of individualism and competition, the domination of the interests of the larger section by the interests of some individuals, all of which have brought humanity to the brink of such complete disaster through wars, economic waste, growth of bitter hatred, destruction of creative life, etc.

The superiority of co-operative effort has already been established wherever it has been attempted ; in production, distribution, cultivation, housing, recreation, transport and a host of other activities. The same institution and technique needs to be expanded from the small group-functioning to the nation and from each national area to the entire world, to settle disputes and deal with all aspects of economy, social problems such as

health, immoral traffic, drug trade and the like; also stimulate and organise scientific and cultural amenities for the benefit of all.

The next objective is freedom. According to an uncritical and superficial understanding of life, freedom is inconsistent with a socially controlled life, while on closer thought we realise that freedom is possible only in a well-ordered, disciplined society. Freedom in its proper sense, is the fullest opportunity for development and the realisation of the gifts, talents, potentialities inherent in man, and which are the instruments through which he gathers satisfaction or in other words, happiness. It is because man realised that he can get better satisfaction through an organised life than through anarchist struggle, that he evolved this social organism, society. But there are controls and controls. Where they strangle self-realisation by exercise of arbitrary force, they must be removed. Thus reconstruction has two aspects, clearing away the useless junk and building up the new type of social organism. A free society has also to be a democratic one, for the two are different aspects of the same principle. This has so far been emphasised only in the political field, while its application to the economic and social sections of group life has been slower and often opposed. Thus parties and individuals who support one, hotly fight the other, although real democracy in life is only possible when the principle is observed in every phase of our life.

But this cannot be brought about by agitation alone or merely advocating it to the people. Those who believe in the principle must also work for it; for a free and democratic society of today demands much higher mental sharpness and capacity as well as a higher standard of public spirit and service than was called for by the simpler life of yesterday. The qualities called for from the man in the street are not for the management of the details of administration, but the sharp discernment to take right decisions on broad principles and issues and select the right type of leader to further the selected policies. Nor can the public stop with mere decisions and selections. It has to serve the cause from day to day to further and maintain the fundamentals on which the society has been constructed. Then alone can democ-

racism be made a real working proposition and give society its fullest benefits.

In conclusion we may say that because of certain universal traits in human nature, certain needs have become fundamental for the realisation of man's happiness. A society is efficient and satisfactory in proportion to the degree to which it secures satisfaction of the following needs : physical health for all members of the society, conditions of work that provide creative expression for the worker ; physical and economic security ; a social setting that promotes self-expression and personal dignity by providing equal opportunity and equal social status ; education to equip for adequate living and enable intellectual pursuits ; aesthetic satisfaction from congenial surroundings ; contact with nature ; leisure for play and creative hobbies ; social relationship and social control so adjusted as to enable each individual free play for his personality in a well-organised disciplined society.

## CAPITALISM, IMPERIALISM AND EXPLOITATION\*

**T**ODAY the peasants and the workers of the world occupy a unique position in international affairs. All eyes are directed towards them for life has begun to revolve around this gigantic axle. Though they had long been recognised as a mighty force, post-war events have brought this poignantly home to us ; the economic chaos with its accompanying distress serves to accentuate it further.

In a colonial country in the throes of a great struggle, like India, these two powerful elements take on a special significance. To understand this fact we have first of all to understand what imperialism means and how it reacts on the exploited toiling classes ; why imperialism is only an extension of capitalism.

Imperialism in its correct sense has entered upon its proper phase, or the " monopoly stage of capitalism " as Lenin has described it—monopoly not only in the creation of trusts and companies, but in the annexation of colonies also. This stage comes only when the whole world has been completely shared

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\* Address at the Workers and Peasants' Conference at Jubbulpore, 26th April 1946.

among the imperialist powers. When production becomes vast and competition keen and capitalism tends to defeat its own purpose, it makes a desperate effort to bolster itself up on entering what Lenin describes as "a new social order which marks the transition from free competition to the socialisation of production." Thus capitalism is trying to do the impossible, to make private property fit social production. We find today both the world and production the monopoly of a few imperialist powers. It is very necessary to understand that imperialism is neither an individual nor a nation nor a government, but a very vast economic system that needs a political body successfully to work itself out. It is against this background that the Indian problem must be considered.

India is pre-eminently an agricultural country today although until the early part of the eighteenth century she was a great manufacturing country as well. R. C. Dutt observes, "The Indian handlooms supplied the markets of Asia and Europe." But thanks to the advent of British imperialism, the natural transition from handicrafts to machinery was arrested, to make her the supplier of raw products for British industries, and a ready market for British manufactures. Skilled Indian workers were made to work in the few British factories that were set up in India, while hundreds of thousands who were thus turned out of employment by the destruction of their traditional occupation migrated to the land. This naturally led to excessive overcrowding of the land beyond its capacity. The maximum number that a square mile of agriculture can maintain is 250. But in India the number has far exceeded that. In Bengal it is 608, U.P. 427, Madras 300. Organised industry being undeveloped it absorbs barely one per cent. while agriculture takes seventy-five per cent., the rest either going into unorganised industries, eking out a precarious existence or joining the ranks of the unemployed.

Nor is agriculture intensive or productive enough to feed growing hungry mouths. Being moreover in a hopelessly backward condition the returns from all this excessive labour and the time expended on it are very poor. It provides a bare daily ration of about 1.2 lb. per head. Even the standard in famine relief

is 1.29 per head. It is deficient in quality also. More than 40 million people do not have even one proper meal a day. The average income does not exceed two to three annas a day. The annual income per head in India as compared with £72 in the U.S.A. and £50 in England, is only about £5.

The peasant is also faced with severe handicaps in his efforts to improve his condition. The primitive nature of the implements, the poor quality of the seed and manure, lack of private finance and absence of State help all make for these very sorry conditions. All that the few research institutes do is to eat up money without any corresponding benefit in the shape of agricultural improvement. The Government spends less than  $\frac{1}{2}$  anna per acre on agricultural improvement as compared with 1s. 11d. in the U.K.

The subsidies paid to the steel industry exceed the amount spent on agriculture although agriculture supports 224 million as against 300 thousand in the Iron and Steel Industry. It shows the strength of capitalism in the imperialist regime.

Rural indebtedness has of late become such a scandal that it hardly needs any special commentary. This is no doubt the result of an economic system that compels the peasant to borrow for his very daily existence and leaves no margin for saving. The total debt is estimated at 900 crores by the Government Enquiry Committee. But what is so deplorable is that the bulk of this debt is unproductive. The principal source that supplies the loan is the professional money-lender who, according to the Machagen Committee, charges as much as sixty per cent. Usury has thus become all-pervading and all-powerful, for, under the existing judicial and revenue systems the money-lender's position has become consolidated. The Agricultural Commission commenting on rural debt says, "to a great extent the cultivator in India labours, not for a profit, not for a net return, but for a subsistence." The crowding of the people on the land, the lack of alternative means of securing a living, the difficulty of finding any avenue of escape and the early age at which man is burdened with dependants, all combine to force the cultivator to grow food on whatever terms he can. Where his land has passed into the possession of his creditor, no legislation will serve

his end ; no tenancy law will protect him ; for food he needs land, and for land he must plead before a creditor to whom probably he already owes more than the total value of the whole of his assets. That creditor is only interested in the immediate exploitation of the land in his control. The transference of the land from the cultivator to the money-lender is another destructive factor in the villages. Uncontrolled by legislation, these money-lenders prey on their easy victims. Co-operative credit societies do not solve this problem. They merely add to the difficulties. The evil is much more fundamental and has to be taken as a whole and the entire system revolutionised to obtain any appreciable change for the better.

Lack of education is another serious handicap the Indian peasantry suffers from. The low literacy figures can be explained by the following facts. Money spent on education per head in India is 9d. as compared with £2 15s. 0d. in England. But the pivot round which all rural life revolves is land tenure. All laws are dependent on and subservient to it. Linked up with this is the question of land tax. I shall first deal with the latter. This is one of the main causes of the heavy rural indebtedness. The commission of enquiry after going into the condition of the ryots of Deccan in 1870 says : " We have endeavoured to show that the normal condition of the ryots is one of indebtedness owing to some natural causes and others the result of our administration." While the prices of agricultural products have been steadily falling, the taxes have been steadily mounting until the country is well nigh on the verge of economic collapse. In some districts they have increased by hundred per cent. in the last 100 years. Today as the result of tax enhancement in the district of Kanara in Karnatak, 125,000 small holdings out of a total of 138,500 are being completely wiped out and eight times as many are going hungry. And it is no wonder when prices are today down by over fifty per cent.

Now to come to the most important question of land tenure. It varies almost from province to province but there are these broad types, the zamindari, mahalkari and the ryotwari. Originally in the old days there were a number of revenue farmers for collecting taxes. British imperialism endowed them with full

proprietary rights. In some provinces where no such revenue farmers existed, Government created zamindars out of enterprising contractors. As Baden-Powell remarks : " A Zamindar in his natural growth of a century was bad enough ; but what could be said for an auction room landlord ?" In the Central Provinces we have a similar instance of proprietary rights being conferred on revenue farmers, although every village was originally ryotwari. This type of landlordism always means absolute ownership. As Professor Grover has remarked, " Next to war, pestilence and famine, the worst things that can happen to a rural India is absentee landlordism." It brings about the wholesale neglect of land, continuous drain of all available things from the village towards urban areas, and the utter starvation of the farmer.

Then there are the agricultural labourers who form about 18 to 20 per cent. of the total population or so whose state is little short of slavery. There is just one other factor that adds to the burden of the peasant, the currency policy of the Government, tying the Indian rupee to the British pound and manipulating the exchange so as to keep the price of raw materials down to benefit the manufacturing country—in this instance England. Similarly the fiscal policy, so that English goods may have easy and permanent markets here through advantageous custom duties.

Let us turn to the other aspect of Indian economic life, Industry. It is still in its infancy. A good deal of the industrial development came during the world war more as a military necessity. This backwardness had a most disastrous effect on the entire national economics. The poor condition of industry also keeps the standard of living of the labourer low. The hours of work though shortened by recent legislation, are still too high for a tropical country like India. Here again as in the villages, ravages of disease or poor diet cause considerable havoc with these toilers. The housing is bad and inadequate. The condition of factories is too poor in the absence of statutory control over their construction. To quote the Royal Labour Commission on labour, " A large number, probably the majority of the factory owners, make no endeavour to mitigate the discomfort, to use a mild word, that the hot weather brings to their operatives." Ninety-seven per cent. of the workmen live in single rooms—that is sixty per cent. of

the total population, on an average of 6 to 9 persons occupying one room. In London ten per cent. of the total population live in single tenements with an average of 1.92 persons per room. It is no wonder that infant mortality has reached the figures of 828.5 per 1000 in cities like Bombay.

The wages paid are most inadequate, and due to depression they are being still lowered. According to Mr. Brailsford, for every £100 which these mills paid in profits to their shareholders in Scotland, they paid 12 per cent. to their Indian labourers. The system of recruitment of labour makes the labourer fall an easy prey to the all-embracing tentacles of the money-lender who advances money on the prospective wages and thus keeps a grip on the labourer. And when wages are so arbitrarily fixed as they are in India, the labourer has poor hopes of getting out of debt.

The immediate task before the country today is therefore the organising of the peasants and the workers, for through them alone the struggle for Freedom can achieve its purpose. Powerful Trade Unions and strong Peasant Leagues will lay the foundation of such a mass movement. The peasant movement in India has a particular significance, for in an industrially backward country like India the appreciation of its decisive role is the tactical task of the movement. The economic motive is one of the most powerful factors common to all mankind. It has played an important part in the India of the past and will play an equally great or perhaps greater part in the India of the future. There is therefore no occasion for diffidence. If one is to visualise a free India one has to think in terms of the complete wiping out of all forms of exploitation, whether it be of one class over another, one caste over another or one sex over the other. It is such an India that we dream of and strive to make, a land of real freedom. But the key to it lies in the hands of the masses, the peasants and the workers, and they alone can unlock that magic door that will lead us to that state of freedom which our comrades all over the world are dreaming of and striving for.



## LABOUR PROBLEMS

**I**NDUSTRIALISM with its modern connotation is relatively new to India although it has a long and great history of industrialism of another nature. The two in fact have still a meeting point. For so many of the handicrafts into which centuries of experiment, adventure and achievement have gone to make them the exquisite objects of beauty and grace that they are, cannot, in the face of advancing mechanisation, be allowed to disappear. We might usefully remember that upto the eighteenth century India was almost the workshop of the world. That apart, in such a thickly populated country as India in which rural economy is bound to continue to be a very dominant factor for a long time to come, cottage industries and handicrafts will undoubtedly play a decisive role. It is necessary that workers should realise this inherent link between the two.

In spite of the war-time acceleration, Indian industry as compared with industrial countries of the west, suffer from certain drawbacks due mainly to the industrial policies inflicted upon India ever since the advent of foreign domination, such as the retarding of its natural growth, manipulation of exchange and tariffs, control over credit, shipping, freightage rates and the like. Industrialisation pushed up by expediency such as the two world wars has been haphazard, unplanned and lacking in the smooth adjustment, high efficiency of management and standard of administration, industries in the west have come to acquire over long years of experience. Above all, this maladjustment has aggravated even more the social problems facing us, particularly those of the working class. The stability, harmony and prosperity of a society is determined by the fulfilment of the essential needs of its common man. In the newly born Indian urban industrial class this is far from the case, and the hazards and the rewards of the industrial system are not equitably distributed amongst the workers. Industrial progress should in fact denote approximation of standards of work and of living among different peoples. Therefore, as India's industrial progression curve

ascends, it should be automatically reflected in the general conditions of labour, its scale of wages and standard of living ; and any differences in this between India and the other industrialised countries of the world should be more apparent than real.

In fact war-time England and America have had to launch many social security measures, and the idea that the security and well-being of the worker is the primary function of the State, has found more adequate expression. Whereas in India the war-time policy has shown neither imagination nor foresight ; in fact in many respects it has betrayed definitely retrograde tendencies. Thus while the belligerent countries of the west adopted additional shifts throughout the week, in India the Government allowed an increase of the daily hours of work from nine to ten and even eleven as in the case of textile operatives, while the Ordnance and Engineering departments put the workers on 66 and sometimes 70 hours a week. It is now a well established fact that longer hours and greater fatigue leads to deterioration in efficiency and invariably lowers the *per capita* production, not to speak of decline in the industrial community. In the case of the Indian worker this has meant a greater burden for he was already doing longer hours even before the war—54 hours per week as compared with 48 in England, 40 in America and 36 in Russia.

Turning to wages, a similar hardship has prevailed. While controls were forged to cover all aspects of industrial and commercial life, very little was done to enforce the minimum wages, overtime allowances, social insurance and other ameliorative measures. As a matter of fact, surprising though it may seem, all through the war years there was hardly any increase in the basic wage rate. For actually the sharp abnormal rise in the cost of living was sought to be mildly compensated by such temporary palliatives as dearness allowance, bonus, supply of foodstuffs at concession rates and the like. In short at a time which called for the most judicious labour policy even in the interest of accelerating production and maintaining it at a high tempo, any measures which did not guarantee the bare human needs such as fair wage, adequate housing, insurance against illness or even maternity benefits to women workers, became un-

intelligent and irrational. For on the one hand production in India increased appreciably if not basically. The production of textiles expanded from 4,269 million yards in 1938-39 to 4,800 by 1944. In leather, the footwear output alone increased from 7.6 million pairs in 1941 by more than double—16.22 by 1942. In fact India supplied some 80 per cent. of the articles needed for the Indian Army.

Yet the basic expansion has actually been comparatively very low as we shall presently see. For although war naturally accelerates the pace of expansion as well as the productive capacities of a country due to heavy and varied demands, in reality in India this logical growth was deliberately retarded by England so as to be able to maintain her control over the Indian markets even in the post-war period. As no capital goods were encouraged to come into the country, it meant overworking the existing equipment, both the mechanical as well as the human, with considerable detriment to the economic and social well-being of India. This inevitably resulted in unprecedented inflation. For, as foreign imports rapidly declined and no fresh channels of production were created in the country, the rapidly turned out currency notes could mean only so many bits of paper. It is said that these increased by some 5,000 per cent. Under this circumstance, prices too naturally soared, especially as for over the major war period no adequate attempt was made to control any such erratic phenomenon. Even today the prices range in the neighbourhood of 300 per cent. over the pre-war level with untold misery for the general masses of this country.

Another equally important factor which has depressed the wages of the Indian working class is the abnormal disparity between rural and urban wages and therefore of the general standards of life. Indian agricultural labour is probably the most poorly paid in the world, nearly as little as an anna per diem, sometimes even less, when it is in cash ; with a seer of cereal when it is in kind, in provinces like Bihar. Pressure of population, excessive fragmentation, decline of supplementary occupations like cottage industries, have continually kept up the flow of this much depressed humanity from villages to towns and cities, desperately seeking a means of eking out an existence. The industrial

employers have not hesitated to take the fullest possible advantage of this state of affairs to keep the general wage level of industrial labour low in spite of the high cost of living in urban areas. It is therefore with no surprise that one learns from the Bihar Labour Enquiry Committee that 40 per cent. of the workers in Jamshedpur do not obtain a living wage, which works out to about Rs. 20. What is more, even with the help of their bonus they are not able to ensure for themselves the absolute minimum standard. For it is proved that the rents of cheaper dwellings such as those used by the majority of these workers, have risen from 50 to 65 per cent. When it is realised that the landless population would be not less than 5 million out of 13.8 million of agriculturists and that the former is steadily on the increase, the low scale of wages prevailing in Indian industry becomes explicable. The districts, for instance, which supply labour at so cheap a rate, are just those where bond-slavery still exists with a fairly heavy load of debts attached to it, and where the sad victims of this shameful practice are glad enough to be able to grab at any opportunity of earning a little petty cash, mostly to pay the heavy interest on their loans. Migrating from the village to the town is characteristic of the landless peasant, this class being followed by the cultivators of small uneconomic holdings, especially during the slack season or when drought or famine overtakes agriculture.

It is against this related background that the entire problem of the Indian working class has to be appraised. Ordinarily in every country when industries are started in urban areas attractive wages have to be offered to be able to draw workers from the villages. Logically it also follows that gradually as the industry gets established the higher industrial wages serve to set a higher scale for wages all round including the agricultural wages in that area. This healthy phenomenon is unfortunately conspicuous by its absence in India. For where there is heavy population pressure and agricultural stagnation, there is too plentiful a supply of migrant workers from the villages which serve to check the rise in industrial wages. For after all industrial wage maintains a certain proportional relationship to agricultural wage. The reciprocal reaction between industrial and agricultural wage, it

has now been recognised, is regulated by all the above listed factors such as pressure on the land, number of landless labourers, system of land tenure, etc. As Harold Butler in his *Problem of Industry in the East* has said : " The standards in the cities are necessarily influenced by conditions in the countryside. As long as the village remains as backward in these respects as it is at the moment, it is difficult to see how the wages and manner of life of the urban worker can be substantially improved. His standard of living is constantly threatened by the influx of fresh workers from the country, anxious to get a job at almost any price, prepared to lodge in the most insanitary hovels and unaccustomed to any form of modern social organisation."

It is well nigh impossible to give any scientific analysis of the wage system in India, for the basis differs from industry to industry and locality to locality ; and in spite of the existence of the Payment of Wages Act of 1936, there is considerable chaos in the routine of payment from delays to authorised fines and deductions and such other practices. Law by itself is no guarantee of a fair system. That lies with the sanctions that Labour is able to create through its organisational strength.

The Indian administration has long been characterised by its lack of and complete indifference to adequate statistics on any worth-while item on human affairs. " We find ourselves," observed the Royal Commission on Labour, " crippled by past neglect in this direction. The material available is inadequate as a basis for any complete treatment of the workers' ills. Even to such an elementary question as the extent to which the workers' earnings suffice to provide for their necessities, no precise answer can be given." One has therefore to depend on vague and inadequate figures with regard to wages or any other item for the matter of that.

Wages are the index to a man's existence. They not merely procure the means wherewith to satisfy the essential needs of the earner, but also provide the framework to his life. From them emanate the two points—income and the mode of life—which run into each other and complete the circle ; the two are reciprocally interdependent. Man may not live by bread alone. But he lives by bread as well as quite a few other things which to a

human being are equally important. All this is today hurriedly summed up as the "standard of living." That is why wages are crucial.

Today, however, with the gradual expansion of the concept of human needs, the implication of compensation for productive labour too has been considerably enhanced. For wages in the way of weekly or monthly cash payments are only one fraction of what society recognises as due rightfully to the workman in the nature of housing, all types of civic amenities, provision for social welfare and security and the kind. The responsibilities of the State, of the employers and of the society as a whole, have come to be accepted as on a par with one another. For, apart from the question of the State's obligations to the well-being of the community, a high proficiency in production itself calls for the maintenance of certain living standards for the working classes. Modern industrial communities show progressively a higher volume of production and proportionately a rising standard of living. Professor Radha Kamal Mukerji writes : " In Bombay wages have shown higher levels and greater proportionate increases than in most parts of India. . . . Proportionately there is discernible an improvement in the standard of efficiency. Therefore some employers feel justified in offering higher wages in order to get greater efficiency from a better class of workers with a higher standard of living. The paradox is however nowhere more true than in India—that cheap labour is dearly paid for. Many workers in India are in fact employed on such low wage standards that any high standard of efficiency cannot be expected, since the plane of family living and expenditure touches the rock-bottom."

A fallacious concept is fostered by employers that any increase in wage leads to greater idleness and demoralisation in the workers. It may be true in some instances, in which case the social causes for it need investigation and exposition. For it is just not natural for normal human beings to react that way. It is obviously the throw-back to the extremely depressed social environment which has seeped through them crushing out all initiative and ambition and let the deadly pall of extreme apathy settle like a heavy shroud on their inmost being. Normally the

workers react healthily to a rise in incomes by showing a readiness for increased expenditure on various items which may be classified normally as luxuries, and comparatively less on food items. Moreover, wherever wages are higher the workers' budgets reveal a definitely higher standard reached by them which renders the argument advanced by some employers quite untenable.

With an absolutely or semi-illiterate people like our Indian labour, it is absolutely essential to provide amusements and cultural pursuits to direct the workers' leisure hours as well as their hard-earned money into wholesome and fruitful channels of extra-professional occupations. The transformation of social customs and habits of expenditure is a tardy process. State protection through proper regulations as well as intensive education is necessary for that together with the substitution of healthy recreation, to combat the existing unwholesome diversions of drink and vice. It is sad to note that workers of all income-groups are in debt. The burden naturally falls heaviest on the lower income ones. Much of the debt of industrial workers is owed to shopkeepers who supply foodstuff and other daily necessities on credit carrying an interest of 26 to 37 per cent. Some of these shopkeepers who supply such essentials as foodstuff charge an exorbitant price and take the fullest possible advantage of the workers' ignorance. These and many other evils which today weigh heavily on the workers can be combated only through strong working-class organisations which must carefully educate the workers on the one hand and organise social opinion amongst the public and the Government on the other, until the workers are able to come into their own.

In this the dominant role devolves on the workers themselves. To fulfil this task the need for building up a working-class leadership is imperative. For this leadership has to perform the political task of constructing a democratic state on the will and sanction of the people, at the same time the other task of reconstructing society in which labour will obtain the just dues of its industry and every citizen enjoy the right to a satisfactory human existence.

## INDUSTRIAL DISPUTES AND INDUSTRIAL PEACE

**I**NDUSTRIAL strikes have become the topic of the day wherever people foregather—in clubs and restaurants, drawing-rooms and public meetings, buses and trams. They have become more pressing and disturbing than the scarlet-tongued demon of scarcity which still haunts this land.

Industrial disputes are a class on their own, unlike most other aspects of our national life. One cannot avoid them by just sitting still and doing nothing. They get you wherever you may be. There is no escaping them just as there is no escaping bad weather, even if you were to close down the shutters. The storm may still blow off your roof, the flood run into your basement or the lightning hit your walls and columns.

So is it with the strikes. Without your being aware of them, they will dislocate your life and drive it off its normal rails. For today there is no such thing as an individual self-sufficient existence. You are part and parcel of a giant mechanism, whose working is a mystery to most of us. You are caught up in its perpetual revolution—whether you will it or not.

Strikes are, therefore, all the more bewildering. One simply does not know what to do about them. So, hot and bothered, everybody ventures to offer some panacea or other. The other day, in a railway compartment, I heard someone holding forth on this topic of the day :

“ It is all the fault of the Provincial Ministries. If only they would fix a minimum wage scale, all would be well and there would be no more strikes. What is the use of having Popular Governments if they can't do this simple thing and save us all this bother ? ”

To him, it was as simple as all that, for the real nature of industrial conflict is a closed book to many still.

*Industrial unrest, manifested through labour strikes on almost an unprecedented scale, is today a world phenomenon. It indicates one fact, that the old economic order is fast breaking down*



*and the old processes and procedures which regulated our economic affairs have become ineffective and call for newer and fresher methods. In short, vast forces of a fundamental nature are rising and our social organism heaves and tosses, like a rudderless boat caught in a storm.*

These strikes, unlike strikes of the "good old days," tend to dislocate our social life in a manner they never did before. For geographical units, which include humans as well, have grown greatly interdependent. Like an intricate jungle, where trees grow into one another, our needs and the means of their satisfaction have become intertwined with the demands and supplies of vast territories and countless peoples.

In a way, our economic structure has today become like a huge octopus, the whole of which we cannot see. We merely glimpse sections and parts, and mistake these for the whole, with the result that we land ourselves in no end of confusion.

On the whole, labour is, at the moment, in a more advantageous position, for it enjoys today considerably more sympathy from the public than at any other time before. To a large extent this is so because of the universal disapproval of the profiteering class, industrialists, traders and practically all classes of employers.

But beyond that, any discerning appraisal of the situation is bewildering, for the average man hardly knows the "ropes" and oversimplification such as an over-all faith in wage standardisation as a solution is misleading and may be even dangerous at times. One has only to look at other countries, where standardisation of economy as a way out has been attempted, to realise that it is an infinitely more complicated problem than we think.

Broadly speaking, industrial disagreements or strikes are an inherent feature of capitalistic economy even as unemployment is, basically because of the system of the owners' complete control over the tools of production without which the workmen even in spite of specialised and expert skill, become valueless. The immediate causes of the trouble, however, vary from cases of dismissal of individual workers or retrenchment of groups of workers to more general problems, as hours of work, wages, bonus, leave and other conditions of employment; in short, whenever

and wherever grievances gather enough strength and unanimity to become the collective focal point round which workers rally for united action. All these factors are implicit today in the Indian situation. But one inherent weakness of the Indian working-class movement is the absence of a strong Trade Union movement. The history of the All-India Trade Union Congress is a pitiable one. Comparatively recent in origin, torn by internal conflicts between political groups, split and divided for a time, it came together almost just in time to face the catastrophic upheavals of the war era. It had not the time to gather its scattered and virgin forces together to consolidate into a major organ of so vast and important a body as the Indian working-class. To add to its tragedy, the genuinely militant and revolutionary working-class leadership got locked up all through these very crucial years, leaving the field to such sections as the Royists and Communists who because of their pro-war policy, came unhesitatingly to betray the working-class to serve their political, and in the case of the former, personal ends. The workers were thus deprived of a grand opportunity to stabilise their economic status on a higher basic wage and other advantageous conditions. Even in England where Labour was associated with the Coalition Government and in the United States where workers voluntarily decided to abstain from strike, the workers reaped greater benefits, in the former partly through strikes (as a matter of fact there were more strikes in England during the war years than in India during the corresponding period) and partly through accelerated economic activity under war pressure; in the United States through the gigantic bargaining power the workers generated by canalising on the abnormal demand for labour and corresponding labour shortage. But alas in India, it was just the time when the Union strength was allowed to wither away through a deliberate policy of beating down the workers and using them merely as hands for speeding up war efforts, because of the anti-national leadership whose influence alone was allowed to prevail upon the Indian workers, thanks to the imperialist machinations in alliance with the Communists.

The lack of a strong Trade Union movement means infinitely greater hardship for the workers. There is no law in existence

to compel recognition of unions by employers ; with the result that even the formation of unions provokes intimidation and victimisation from the management. The workers are yet too ill-equipped educationally and suffer from inability to provide its own leadership and have to depend mainly on outside aid. Even today it is not uncommon for workers to be compelled to strike to get the Union recognised. Under such exasperating conditions, it is not uncommon for the workers to strike even on petty issues. Sometimes even if recognition is won for the workers, it is either ignored or the recognition if granted under an expediency is promptly withdrawn once that expediency passes off.

It was only after World War I that industrial strikes became a general feature of our national life. The big general strikes of Bombay and Calcutta from 1924 to 1929 were a new feature of considerable magnitude for those times. For any industry worth the name became apparent only during the World War.

The advent of popular Ministries have in a way indirectly encouraged strikes, (for a popular Government rouses unprecedented hopes in the bosom of the people) ; at the same time they have contributed equally to the success of strikes. In 1946, the first half-year saw over a thousand strikes, involving about 1,500,000 workers. Analysis of success and failure clearly shows that the defeats were clearly where the unions were least developed and strengthened. Strikes are today accepted as a recognised weapon of the workers either to win a right they have been denied or to record their protest against some grievous wrong. Still they have to be used only as a last resort. That is, however, only possible if certain well-established conventions as in the west are built up aided by appropriate legal measures and conciliatory machinery. For a practicable working of this, however, two factors are essential : acceptance of the position and role of trade unions by employers, and readiness to deal with them on terms of equality ; sound education of workers in the economic implications of their attitude towards industry, in the context of the national and economic need for rapid and high-power industrialisation as for instance in India and other colonies where the countries are turning over from colonial to national economy, and the problem of opposition and competition from

the ruling metropolitan country. Labour workers have therefore a dual role : to organise the workers for the institution of collective bargaining ; and side by side to develop intensive study of general economics and of the particular problem which they are being called upon to face and solve. In its absence, there is bound to be constant chaos, especially lightning strikes for which the reason must be sought, not in the immediate causes but rather in the far-away background of frustrated workers' conditions, insecurity and the like which are normal to a class that are denied a subsistence wage and the most elementary amenities of life. With the result that strikes have become more frequent and common, causing serious injury to the economic life of the country, great privations to the workers and considerable inconvenience to the public, not to speak of the long aftermath of the dispute, resulting in grave mental distrust between employer and employee.

The small-sized, practically all-local unions (for there are only two or three national unions worth the name) are not in a position to forge sanctions for the workers, to strengthen their solidarity for collective bargaining and their general capacity and staying power through ameliorative, constructive and educational measures. Many of the present unions are more or less glorified strike committees to which the workers turn during the brief period of a strike, then once again fall away when the pressure of the storm is lifted. The pitifully little fund the Union has is spent away during the strike, with the result that the normal follow-up work such as providing educational facilities, medical aid, unemployment and other benefits, especially during a period of personal distress to a worker, co-operative credit, co-operative societies, reading rooms, sports and games clubs, entertainments and amusements ; all such essential activities either slacken or cannot be pursued. It is obvious that unions cannot be maintained for all time on slogans and shibboleths unless they are reinforced simultaneously with welfare work.

It has already been noted that victimisation by employers of labour workers goes on on a fairly large scale as has been proved before various Government-appointed commissions and committees. In the course of giving an award in an industrial

dispute referred to them for arbitration, Pandit Nehru and Dr. Rajendra Prasad make the following comments : " Jamshedpur became notorious in past years for its goonda element ; there were frequent clashes between sets of workers belonging to rival unions, meetings were broken up, violence and the throwing of stones were common occurrences. Under these circumstances, no strong and disciplined labour unions could grow up and the interests of the workers were sacrificed by ambitious leaders. It was commonly thought that the Company were not averse to these conflicts between rival unions and encouraged them in the hope that they would lead to weakening of the labour movement. Some of the labour leaders and their henchmen were openly accused of receiving subsidies."

In one of their Annual Reports the Textile Labour Association of Ahmedabad, one of the strongest unions in the country, makes the following observation : " The most powerful factor discouraging the spread of labour organisation is the fear of victimisation. It is no idle imaginary fear. The Association has paid out Rs. 45,000 in the shape of ' Victimisation Benefit ' during the last 10 years. Not a step can be taken in the direction of extending the union membership without provoking mass dismissals and large-scale victimisations."

The Bombay Textile Enquiry Committee's Technical Adviser has observed : " Even in Ahmedabad, trade unionism has had a chequered career during the last two decades of its existence and no employer with the exception of one or two, in spite of existing arrangements, has allowed a union to be formed without resistance, victimisation and strikes." In U.P. due to repeated complaints of this nature, the Government had actually to order a court of enquiry, to look into the charges. Just as intimidation is used to terrorise workers so also bribery and favouritism and other corrupt methods are also resorted to by employers to keep down labour organisations. Certain amount of protection is offered against this as for instance in the Bombay Industrial Disputes Act. But actually the enforcement of it is slack and ineffective due to the weakness of the labour unions and the general depression of the entire working-class movement.

As a matter of fact the Indian Trade Union Act is barely

20 years old, adopted as late as in 1926, giving registered trade unions legal status and their executive and members immunity from civil and criminal liability in respect of strikes ; it also enabled the Union funds to be spent for the conduct of industrial disputes and the provision of various amenities for the workers.

Other unfair methods resorted to by the employers to prevent labour organisation are restriction on meetings of workers on their grounds, collection of dues in the Union quarters, visiting of Union men in the Labour lines and a host of similar bans. The Bombay Labour Enquiry Committee reports of several complaints of the nature stated above. Moreover where workmen occupy mill quarters, they are not only in danger of being evicted at the time of strike, but even when they stay on, of water and light being cut off from their quarters. All these policies the employers follow are short-sighted and whatever disadvantages may accrue to the workers, they are piling up infinitely more danger for the employer-class itself. For industrialisation will go apace and the proletariat class increase a hundred-fold. With such changes will also come an intensification of class consciousness and effective class action.

A new danger that is threatening the labour movement is communalism. The Muslims are being actively encouraged to form a separate trade union movement and there is discernible a growing tendency for workers under Muslim League influence to join communal unions. Such tendencies have always been encouraged by employers who see in it the opportunity for splitting the workers' front on demagogic and unreal issues. Particularly in Bengal employers have done their best to foment differences between the major communities and even between the provincial and other language groups, as Bengali and Hindustani. Sometimes as many as half a dozen unions can be found in a single mill area representing various communities, encouraged by the employers through bribery, favouritism, non-recognition, persecution, meting out to each the measure that would serve the employers' interest best.

Until recently industrial disputes were more a matter for those who were entrusted to keep the "law and order," such as the police and magistracy rather than for society to treat as grave

economic ills bred in our social organism which the strike merely served to pose. The employers made strikes a police concern by whose aid strikes were broken by violent force, rounding out of labour workers and the locking up of labour leaders, and generally trying to disintegrate the workers' front by a vigilant system of espionage. This menacing and unscientific attitude of the police and magistracy towards workers and industrial disputes, still continues. They still regard trade unions with suspicion and their organisers as mischief mongers. As long as any section of the administration continues to treat industrial disputes as creations of labour workers and not as an objective economic problem, the situation is fraught with great danger for the future of industrial peace.

There are other factors besides victimisation by employers which impede the growth of trade unionism. One of them is impermanency and irregularity of labour. Most of them continue to maintain their organic link with the village, migrating to the town and city only during the slack season. The stronger this rural connection, the weaker their cohesion with the city workers who form the core of that army. This regular exodus from the villages to the industrial cities results in constant encroachment on the workers' wages and standards of living ; for the ever-moving flood of landless labour from the villages, where the increasing population with little proportionate industrialisation increases the pressure on the land, is being driven more and more townwards. But while they are attracted by the lure of higher wages, the instability of their occupation, chronic housing inadequacy as well as high rents, discourage them from settling down or bringing their families from the village. Only those who come from distant places, however, tend to settle down more permanently ; such noted centres being Ahmedabad, Nagpur, Madras. Jamshedpur is rather exceptional in having workers mostly from other provinces, including the N. W. Frontier. The permanent force, however, fluctuates between 20 and 40 per cent. Even here housing famine prevails, only 30 per cent. of the permanent workers being provided accommodation. Rents too are very high.

The problem of stabilising industrial labour is therefore inextri-

cably bound up with the general industrial set-up. Unless an intelligently and scientifically planned industrial system is established on socialistic lines in this country, it will not be possible for India to escape from the deleterious social consequences which the other industrialised countries have suffered from, including concentration of populations and overcrowding and all the ills which accrue from this. For this decentralisation, especially of those which can be run as small-type industries, should be encouraged. This will help to build more compact communities, with more intimate human ties, physically and mentally healthier, with more hygienic environment, reducing the social ills of the large metropolis to the very minimum.

It is thus seen that whole mountains of impediments have to be moved before a strong trade union can be built up. Public education for rousing its social conscience has to go side by side with workers' education to make them realise the economic implications of their role. Above all, a regular charter of rights for workers is necessary. In this connection it would be worth while studying the American National Labour Relations Act of 1935 which has sometimes been called the Magna Charta of American Labour, under which "unfair labour practices" on the part of the employers becomes illegal for the first time. Some of the sections are as follows :—

Section 7—Employees shall have the right to self-organisations, to bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing and to engage in concerted activities for the purpose of collective bargaining or other mutual aid or protection.

Section :—It shall be an unfair labour practice for an employer.

- (1) To interfere with rights guaranteed under Section 7,
- (2) To dominate or interfere with the formation or administration of any labour organisation or contribute financial or other support to it,
- (3) By discrimination in regard to hire or tenure of employment or any term or condition of employment,



encourage or discourage membership in any labour organisation,

- (4) To discharge or otherwise discriminate against an employee because he has filed charges or given testimony under this Act,
- (5) To refuse to bargain collectively with the representatives, subject to the provision of Section 9(a).

The Act creates a non-partisan Board whose functions are two-fold :

- (1) To aid in the free selection of employee representative agencies by holding elections or otherwise determining the choice of the majority of the workers within an appropriate bargaining unit,
- (2) To prevent unfair labour practices and to see that employers bargain in good faith once the representative agency has been determined.

It is of interest to note that among the Indian States, Mysore has given the lead by introducing legislation to safeguard trade unionism known as the Mysore Labour Act of 1942, which :

- (a) Recognises the right of employees to combine into an association for the promotion of their common interest, provided that there shall be one association of employees ;
- (b) Affords adequate protection to the workers against victimisation by making it punishable by fines up to Rs. 1,000 and directing payment of wages in case of wrongful dismissal, and compensation out of the fine recovered in case of wrongful reduction ;
- (c) Makes it compulsory for an industrial undertaking employing not less than 100 workers to furnish the Labour Commissioner with a statement of Standing Orders regulating industrial relations.

## FULL EMPLOYMENT

“**F**ULL employment in the United States is the first step on the road to permanent world-wide peace. Other nations look at the tremendous economic power of the United States, at the violent fluctuations in the American business cycle, at the previously demonstrated inaptitude of the American Government in dealing with the problem—and after seeing all this and looking toward the future, they shudder, and pray for full employment in the United States, not because they love the U.S. but because they know that without full employment here there is world-wide trouble. Every American has the right to a job and it is the responsibility of the Government to provide it.”

With this broadcast Henry Wallace opened the campaign for full employment in the United States. In spite of all the panic and furore of the big interests, even in this land with its strong tradition of individualism, the idea seems to have come to stay and is fast taking definite shape. President Roosevelt's target of 60 million jobs and Senator Murray's Full-Employment Bill are the direct result of this idea. For unemployment has long ceased to be a national malady, as it has far-reaching international repercussions as well. Unemployment in the United States cannot therefore be regarded as an item of local concern nor the sinister international implications of this phenomenon be lost sight of. It may stagger a good many conventional-minded people to be told that the United States is regarded as the economic sick man of the post-war world. Its titanic productive capacity can make or unmake the rest of our globe. If the United States lapses back into its old malady of flooding the world markets through exports, giving credits freely while at the same time raising high tariffs and restricting imports, then it will once again disorganise its own economy and that of the other countries too by exporting unemployment, as it did in the early thirties. The solution is therefore obviously “Full Employment” in the United States.

A similar slogan is echoing in almost every part of the world,

which only shows that this problem is of crucial interest to everybody. At San Francisco, two of the British Dominions—Australia and New Zealand—were amongst those who sponsored the need for the Economic and Social Council, one of whose functions would be to create conditions for "Full Employment" on as large a scale as possible.

Its need has already been stressed by Sir William Beveridge in his scheme for England in which his plan makes full employment an indispensable pre-condition, without which it falls to the ground.

Thus full employment has long moved from an academic issue to one of immediate practical realisation. A glance at the Bill which Senator Murray introduced in the United States Senate will give us some idea of the contemplated measure in that land of "Free enterprise tradition." The major objective of this may be briefly stated as follows :—The full utilisation of the national resources of the country and provision of fulltime employment of all those seeking work. The responsibilities of the Federal Government for achieving these objectives would be : adoption of policies and programmes calculated to stimulate the highest avenues of employment through private and State efforts ; preparedness for federal investment and expenditure to ensure continued full employment. For this purpose the Bill provides that the President be required to transmit to Congress a national production and employment budget, which would estimate the total number on the labour market ; the aggregate value of expenditure required to provide employment opportunities for this number ; the anticipated value of expenditures both private and public, and where the last is not large enough to provide full employment, the President is to recommend legislation toward contributing to filling up this gap through monetary, trade and fiscal policies ; and finally if this is inadequate, the Government to suggest additional federal expenditures and investment to provide for the potentially unemployed.

But before we understand the full implication of this we must be clear as to what is meant by "Full Employment." Less than two centuries ago, a condition of being unemployed was attributed to personal drawbacks or defects in the individual

character, such as lack of training or ability. We have however travelled a long way from that unscientific approach. Today it is definitely recognised that unemployment, the inevitable offspring of depression, is not an "act of God" but the result of grave flaws in the structure and functioning of our economic system. According to this approach, unemployment results from a deficiency of demand from the society, which means curtailment of production and consequent retrenchment of workers.

Occasionally it is also the outcome of want of balance between savings and investment, which means that unemployment can be combated if an equilibrium can be maintained between production and consumption, savings and expending.

Ironically enough, it was the experience of a total war such as the last one which made people wonder whether "full employment" was such a utopia as it had been supposed to be in the past. If war could provide everybody with a job, why not peace—a period of reconstruction—so argued everybody. It seemed quite logical provided of course there could be posed the same social objective backed up by the same determination to achieve it.

Beveridge and his school of thought believe that full employment is practicable even under individualistic economy. According to his definition, full employment is designed to operate in the institutional pattern of private enterprise and price system, and freedom of choice of occupation for each individual. According to Prof. Pigou, the well-known British economist, full employment means that everybody who wants to be employed is engaged at the ruling rate of wages. It must be realised that under the pre-conditions as envisaged in a "Free Society" (meaning as opposed to totalitarian) the problem in a way becomes more complex than under rigidly worked out, regimented procedures of a dictatorial state. Flexibility both in the selection of jobs as in mobility of movement being a pre-condition of free society, under the present economic, i.e., capitalistic structure, a certain amount of unemployment at any given moment is inevitable. Sir Beveridge thus argues that England must expect, even at theoretical full employment, not less than three per cent. of the labour force of the country to be unemployed. This is

governed in the main by seasonal fluctuations, fractional unemployment and the tides in overseas demands, which could not be overcome completely even by planned programmes. On this basis, the figures for unemployment at any given moment in the United States would be  $2\frac{1}{2}$  to 3 million or 5 per cent. of the total United States labour force. This inevitable feature can therefore be met only by unemployment insurance. That is why those who follow the Marxian theory believe that the very nature of capitalistic society, that is, production through its tenets of private enterprise and private profits, does not lend itself to genuine full employment as defined by Prof. Pigou. The experience of the war-times, however, seems to hold out a hope to those who still cling to their faith in free enterprise, that a definite improvement can be made on the present position by the State securing pretty effective control of the national economy. They are unmindful of the fact that economic functioning does not lend itself to the same type of flexibility or high tempo during normal times as under the pressure of war.

The first condition of a full-employment programme is adequate demand or theoretically total demand. The second, controlled location of industry and, allied to it, organised mobility of labour. The first is greatly dependent on the purchasing power of the largest section of society, which means that money wages shall rise as rapidly as productivity increases. But it should not be to the extent of increasing prices, for that merely works back adversely to the workers. Thus a machinery has to be devised for the purpose of regulating wages through strong well-organised unions and the practice of collective bargaining on the one hand and maintaining stability in the cost of living on the other.

But to start with, all of this works back to the realities of production, that is, outlay to ensure the creation and maintaining of the required number of jobs to ensure full employment. The responsibility for this is increasingly coming to be recognised as that of the State and to be achieved through a national policy. The most important measure in this direction would be by assuring that the total outlay is high enough to set up a demand for products of industry which cannot be satisfied without using the entire man-power and keeping it in full and adequate wages.

This obviously is a task not for private enterprise but the State, which must assume the responsibility for maintaining the adequate volume of production and therefore demand for that production. This calls for a cardinal break with the old conventions which have regulated the past national budgets and consequently national economies, in aiming to keep down State expenditure, the budget resting on available money and the maintaining of budgetary equilibrium. According to Sir William Beveridge the new kind of budget must be based on the datum of man-power, not money. In fact a Government which aims at full employment should be ready to spend more than what it takes away from the people in the shape of taxes. The State outlay must be designed with a view to laying low the social evils that haunt society today, such as want, disease, overcrowding, ignorance and the like, through a bold and comprehensive programme of public investment and construction. A budget for full employment, unlike the orthodox budget which is clearly demarcated by the convention of balancing receipts with expenditure, has to be the over-all regulator of the factors of national income, production and consumption, must be flexible and a long-term one. In addition, the very concept of productive outlay is approached from a totally different angle to cover not merely items of investment that bring in monetary return but also expenditure on health, education, research, housing, etc., which add to the real income of the people. It may no doubt be argued that this would add to the strain on the public funds. It may be so for a time but from a long-term-range point of view, this would add enormously to the national development, both of resources as well as of skill, apart from the fact that unemployment is the inevitable alternative with all its disastrous results. Moreover in a class society the additional expenditure in reality means taxing only certain higher income groups, not the entire community; in other words, it means intercommunity transfers from one section to another, and not burdening all the people with additional charges. The object of such measures is important, for if those amounts are to be spent on the creation of more lasting assets such as schools, hospitals, transport, communications and the like, then it means in reality a redistribution of income rather

than just raising funds for the treasury. The economic return will be as big and sound and real as the social. Even the pro-capitalistic economists are agreed that planning this way on an expanding scale would reduce the cyclic fluctuations. We shall presently see why full employment gives each individual who is able to produce, the opportunity to do so. At the same time we ensure the maintaining of the desired standard of living for as large a section of society as possible through the supply of the required goods. It also means non-wastage of economic resources, and as was stressed by Senator Murray in the United States campaign for the cause of full employment when he said : " Economic tranquillity rests upon full employment with all the social gains that it means for the people." Moreover a condition under which there are more jobs than worker-applicants, is of greater advantage to the workers and likely to augment their bargaining strength. The outlay is in no way an additional burden as is often mistakenly supposed. Therefore, the question whether a Government can afford the plan or not hardly arises. For unemployment is caused by the uneven distribution of the spending power which gets transferred from the pockets of the many to the pockets of the few. The modern economist is therefore more logical when in the absence of any radical change in the economy he recommends taxing those able to save than those anxious to consume. For otherwise demand declines, industry deteriorates and workers get thrown out. The alternative therefore to full employment has always meant so much suffering in the shape of fear, insecurity, malnutrition (which in turn leads to diseases and epidemics), not to speak of the economic loss to the national income because of low production level.

But great as is the material waste, even greater is the moral destruction, the gradual undermining of thousands of families with all the resulting social disruption. The more serious social evil is the anti-social sectors it breeds in the community, through the bitterness and hatred it generates, leading to juvenile as well as adult crime. For unemployment creates a sense of not only economic want and inadequacy but emotional as well, by making whole sections of society feel that they are not wanted, a factor which makes for their general demoralisation. For unemploy-

ment is a condition of involuntary, not voluntary, idleness, that is a state of affairs in which for various reasons men are subjected to indefinite periods of enforced idleness for no fault of theirs. For full employment this process has therefore to be reversed so that the national income may be redistributed so as to increase the purchasing power of the many who are today deprived of it. In capitalistic society where private enterprise falls short of the volume required to keep industry up to the mark required for full employment, the gap must be filled by Government investments and constructive schemes. In fact, the principle now recommended by even orthodox economists of note is for the Government to maintain the normal procedure of keeping all factors of production in full operation. It is now admitted beyond question that at all times unemployment can only be tackled by the Government undertaking the planning, expenditure and execution. It is decidedly more economic in the long run to prevent unemployment than institute inadequate measures such as the conventional capitalistic economy resorts to, like the WPA, PWA, FERA, etc., in the U.S.A. The Keynesians, however, with a more realistic outlook insist that unless measures to keep spending up to income earned in a given period are enforced, there will not only be unemployment but it is bound to spread cumulatively. For instance, if in a certain period the income is 100 million and the spending only 80 million, there is bound to be a 20 million reduction in demand and those affected by this drop must in turn reduce their expenditure and so the cycle of depression widens.

Although the first condition to a full-employment programme is total demand, certain other requisites are equally necessary. Location of industry, for instance, is of the utmost importance not only from the point of rational planning of land and resources, but also of solving the complexes of structural unemployment. Where industries spring up haphazardly, especially in and around large cities, leaving groups of communities without jobs in other parts, at the same time overcrowding in itself, creates so many serious social problems as well as a high mortality.

The third condition is mobility of labour, that is, movement of labour from trade to trade, and industry to industry, that is,



flexibility of the labour supply and sufficiency of demand, which means that labour in accordance with the requirements of dynamic economy, will be moved rapidly and directly to new jobs when required, in an organised manner. This implies removal of all restrictions that make such movement rigid, and provision by the State for the necessary training which can make such changes easily practicable. Otherwise there may be an over-supply in an old industry and scarcity in a new one, with considerable economic damage to industry and labour both.

Basically, however, we work back to total demand, for without it the rest falls to the ground. Economists, social and labour workers are agreed that the responsibility for this must devolve on the Government and to an increasing extent. For what Sir William Beveridge describes as a "free Society" has yet to be realised, in which there would be free competition, no monopolies, with flexibility of prices and wages, and complete mobility of capital and labour. There are, however, optimists and enthusiasts who hope to achieve full employment within the limitations of the present structure with certain adjustments.

The contest to achieve this gets primarily centred between the basic right of every adult to a job versus the supremacy of private enterprise. It is, however, now clearly recognised that private enterprise by itself cannot fulfil the conditions for full employment. In fact, it is being found increasingly difficult to fit private enterprise into any systematic planning. It is to achieve this that the new type of budget is now called for, one in which are included : private consumption outlays, private investment outlays at home ; balance of payments abroad ; tax-financed public outlays, loan-financed public outlays, etc. But where private concerns are involved, the factors become uncertain, although some like Sir William Beveridge have hopes of acquiring a high degree of stability through the regulation of a National Investment Board. For internal private enterprise, which is problematical itself, not to speak of the fluctuations of foreign balances, which are admitted on all hands to be almost beyond control, combine to beset the system with severe handicaps. It is obvious that full employment is possible only with planning, and for planning to be effective it would have to expand both capital equip-

ment as well as consumption, maintaining a proper ratio between them, which in other words means control over consumers' incomes as well as prices. Further, it would mean resorting to redistributive taxation on grounds of social justice as well as economic necessity ; deficit spending on the part of the Government, which means spending beyond revenue receipts ; control over investment as well as trade, particularly foreign ; co-ordinating the activities of the spending and consuming groups ; positive steps for increasing and adjusting production in relation to full employment even where necessary through further facilities for the education and training of labour personnel. This, however, could only be achieved by exercising in turn substantial control over national income and expenditure, which means that centralised planning of the character outlined above is only possible through a central directing agency which has authority over the entire life and economy of the country. Under capitalistic economy what all this means has been amply borne out in corruption, black markets and a host of other means for evading and resisting a law which vested interests resent as encroachment on their rights of free enterprise. The only alternative seems to be socialised State control. For that would ensure not merely the increase of production and adequate jobs, but at the same time the best use of the productive resources, the highest standard for the largest number, and above all, social priorities in the financial outlay itself ; that is, expansion of the public sector of the economy in terms of social services.

Now let us consider this problem in the Indian context and examine some of its local aspects. We have for instance a very large chronic unemployment in the rural areas ; those who live only on agricultural pursuits and are kept in enforced idleness, in some cases about half the year. The gravity of its implication may be gauged when we realise that over 67 per cent. of the population of this country draws its livelihood only by tilling land. Another equally important factor is that while our population has shot up by 36 million in 10 years, there has been no corresponding increase in the land brought under cultivation nor improvement in method to accelerate production. There is an alarming lack of subsidiary professions, even where the income

from land is inadequate. This makes the cultivator a helpless victim of chance and the vagaries of nature. He is not fortified against any mishap, such as crop failure.

Equally grave, though perhaps not on such an extensive scale, is the unemployment amongst the middle and lower middle class, which assumed grave proportions in the interval between the two world wars and is in growing evidence again. Affecting the youth and the intellectuals as it does, it has serious psychological consequences in demoralising the entire community in this country.

Unemployment in India is of a more universal nature than in the West and covers practically all occupational groups, depressing practically the country's entire social content. It is not surprising that even the Bombay Plan makes special mention of it : "Of all the measures we suggest for raising the general level of income in India, provision of fuller scope for employment is the most important . . . without it the establishment of a decent standard of living would remain merely a pious hope." In the final analysis, unemployment in this country is the reflex of our general economic backwardness, the glaring want of development of its vast natural resources. Large-scale as well as small-scale industrialisation, with cottage industries forming an integral part of the industrial scheme, would open the way to solution, although industrialisation by itself is not enough to ensure full employment as we have seen from the instance of England and America.

Although the feasibility of attempting full employment on the Western pattern is mooted, those in authority do not yet seem ready to bring it within the field of practicability. One easy argument is that the large and increasing population of India makes such an attempt impossible. Now, however undesirable or unwieldy the vast numbers may be by themselves it is not their numbers that render the solution futile. For it must not be overlooked that any given resources of a country by themselves do not mean much ; they become meaningful only in relation to those who make use of them. If we take countries like the U.S.A. or U.S.S.R., we find their rising population, far from impeding material progress and economic prosperity, have assuredly added to them, through the provision of ample

man-power, superior technique and increasing internal consumption which is the biggest stimulus to production and which in turn means maximum employment. The 40 crores of India are not a dead mass, they are living entities whose creative power, once the mighty resources are harnessed, can transform this land of poverty to one of plenty. The experiments in the U.S.S.R. as well as the very creditable achievements of the Scandinavian countries prove that full employment is feasible even in a country with pronouncedly rural economy. We may admit that to start with and during the transitional period to higher industrialisation, living standards and incomes would be lower as compared with those of advanced Western countries. But taking the population as a whole, the gain would be preponderating. For one thing employment would greatly increase, considerably reducing the number of the unemployed, wipe out utter destitution and abject poverty. It has often been pointed out that "scarce resources in a static context can become abundant resources in a dynamic context."

A plan based on the material resources and man-power of this country with this social objective, would open a vision of new possibilities in a new direction. That is still lacking in our body politic or economic adventures. Moreover, the financial policy continues to be still subordinate to outside interests, and where Indian interests do dominate, they are mainly the big vested interests. The financial policy would have to be shaped towards an economic and social goal. Capital goods and issues would have to be made available on a big methodical scale to keep to a systematic scheme to building up a specific structure.

The war recruitment served to collect together a very large personnel estimated in the neighbourhood of 8 million which a Government with a plan could put to purposeful use by utilising as our trained cadre to start with. But the resettlement plans are yet in a nebulous condition and offer no hope of speedy and effective mobilisation of these ready resources. Whatever schemes there are in operation today for training the demobbed, become meaningless unless they are related to the future needs of our country as worked out in terms of large-scale social welfare developments, public health and sanitation projects, social insur-

ance schemes, public works, industrialisation and the like. Employment exchanges are no answer to this for they do not *create* jobs; they merely canalise on the existing situation by trying to bring the job-hunters to the already existing jobs wherever these happen to be vacant.

Basically, however, if this objective is to be really attained, socialisation of the national economy is not only desirable, but inevitable, however slow the process may be at the start. For we have already seen that the various proposals cannot be worked out to any real measure of success while vested interests dominate national economy. For the two are inconsistent. If a well-planned scheme is to have No. 1 priority, then private enterprise has either to fall into line or disappear. If the former, then it can exist in only a very modified and controlled form, to which it will react by trying to evade or resist the new controls and continually sabotaging the national plan. The only logical step, therefore, is ultimate socialisation, which alone can give the plans for full employment the maximum scope to grow and develop into a national reality and experience.

## THE AWAKENING OF ASIA

*[For centuries Asia with the exception of Japan, has been ruthlessly exploited by the Western powers. Today a golden opportunity opens out before Asia, the land which has put greater sanctity on human life than on political power; laid greater store by wisdom than wealth, and who once inspired all humanity with its moral codes. But today the people of Asia and the world must be made to realise that the political and economic emancipation of retarded continents like Asia and Africa have a direct bearing upon the question of world peace. This is the great task facing the Inter-Asian Relations Conference meeting in Delhi today.]*

INDIA and the countries of Asia have from early times been influencing one another. Though the ties may have loosened and thinned at times, the ancient thread has never quite snapped.

In many ways, each has reflected the other in its hopes and aspirations, in its struggles and trials, in its achievements and successes. Each country carries within its heart a miniature Asia even as Asia poses the problem of each of its countries.

Over the horizon obscured by international clashes, a discerning vision can clearly see the mighty continental shift from West to East. The Orient is spot-lighted once again as out of a gigantic convulsion emerges a revitalised Asian people with freedom in its heart and revolution on its lips. From Cairo to Canton, moved by a single impulse, the millions instinctively turn inwards to gaze into the heart of this giant land which has cradled them through colourful centuries of triumph and glory and sheltered them through the dark weary storms of oppression and domination. The night has been long and the streaks of pearly pink still faint, yet they hold the promise of refulgent radiance as in their struggling rays we stretch forth our hands in the glad hour of our new birth even as we did in the poignant hour of our anguish.

The gradual attainment to nationhood of the long-enslaved peoples naturally stimulates in them the desire to revive the embers of old, faded friendships and weave afresh the decayed threads of Asian relations. In this context a brief survey of the past is an essential imperative which will provide both a wider background to the present as well as sound the right key to an understanding that will have to form the base for the Inter-Asian structure of tomorrow. The underlying close resemblance between the various nationals of Asia which was once a living experience is today a toneless instrument which only a vigorous touch can galvanise into resonant harmonies.

For, consequent on the subordination of these countries by non-Asian powers, the vital ties slumped and relationship soon became only a dim memory, during the last century and a half. Religion and culture had, like the radiating morning rays once wafted over these lands, lacing them into harmonious designs—Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism—the last named flinging out the longest area. For Buddhism as the rebellious child of Hinduism, proved a vigorous influence linking India with the Far East. Similarly the advent of Muslims into India and the absorption of Islamic

culture into a synthesis of re-orientalised Indian culture, forged closer ties between India and the Middle East. India has in a way continued to remain the cultural clearing-house for Asia, standing as the meeting point of the delicate traceries of the Far East with the rich multi-tones of the Middle East.

Although the central pivot is moving eastwards again the power and strength which alone can give stability and permanence to this giant shift, has still to be generated. Except Japan, practically every country of Asia has been subject to the domination of Western imperialism and, to use a hackneyed phrase, none is yet out of the woods. The domination has been mostly direct or colonial as it is termed ; but in a few cases indirect or semi-colonial. This fact necessarily lends some broad common features to all the countries of this mighty continent. For, national economy has been impeded by the domination of foreign economic interests so that the former could not attain to its full stature. The common features are : general economic backwardness ; being highly ruralised ; low material conditions ; great population pressure on land. Colonial or semi-colonial economy is characterised by its subservience to the interests of the ruling country which either through the exercise of its military or economic pressure, or both, bends the subject country's economy to supplement its own—in other words the colonies remain mainly sources of raw material to feed the industrial hunger of the metropolitan dragon and in turn become one of its chief consuming markets. This sets a general pattern for the entire economy of the colonial country, its currency, exchange, banking, transport, trade, shipping, and all aspects of commerce. With technological development as production assumed gigantic proportions the whole colonial economy has had to be closely geared to these rapid changes. Food crops systematically give way to commercial, and specialisation in specific primary commodities such as for instance cotton and jute in India, rubber and tin in Malaya, tea in Ceylon, sugarcane in Java, rice in Burma, Thailand, etc. From this has followed logically the devising of the railway rate structure and the designing of communications so as to facilitate transport of raw materials to ports and of manufactured import articles from the ships to internal market centres. Likewise with

trade, it is almost exclusively confined to the ruling country. Latterly to meet the growth of national sufficiency policies in the non-Empire countries, the Empire countries have developed imperial preference, which is an intensive form of colonial exploitation. The organising of primary products for export to overseas markets instead of to meet the internal needs of the masses, places the economy on a footing of helpless dependence on the high-power industrial economy of the metropolitan country, not to speak of the pitiable instability which such a condition infuses into the whole set-up.

In the countries directly controlled, the administration formulates currency, exchange and finance policies to aid the imperialist interest as we have long experienced in this country. The colonial country is restricted to the same currency sphere as the ruling one, its loans are floated mainly in the metropolitan capitals and held by its ruling class; the debt is usually diverted into non-productive channels and to consume the metropolitan country's products; and its structure governed by the necessity of maintaining favourable trade balance to meet the interest charges, for there is always a wide disparity between the total debt of the colonies and the corresponding assets created by capital expenditure, making this debt one of the instruments for the exploitation of the colonial masses for the benefit of the imperialist ruling power. The tax-structure too betrays a similarity, indirect taxation being an important characteristic, revenue being mostly derived from customs, excise, land, etc., which makes the system regressive. On the expenditure side, defence services, police, heavily paid top-services (mainly foreign or consisting of picked imperialist stooges), swallow up the major portion of the revenues leaving a small fraction for nation-building items such as education, social services, public health and the like.

In semi-colonial countries, the exploitation is mainly through financial investment and the utilisation of cheap colonial labour, and often control over trade and tariff as well. It is out of this economic morass that Asia has to extricate herself and set her wheels on the road of national economy. A national economy is an independent economy whose first objective is to raise both the productive capacity of the entire country and at the same



time *per capita* income by a more general distribution of the national wealth. The tasks before every country of Asia today are twofold : emancipation from the foreign stranglehold ; an equitable distribution of the increased production. Into this reorganisation will have to be fitted such indispensable items as social services, co-operative ownership and production, elimination of the wide disparity in income-groups to make national prosperity a living reality to the wide masses of each country. The single magic word industrialisation, once the dream of every frustrated colonial, we know today cannot create for us the free society we strive for. For industrialisation in a capitalist economy inevitably brings in its wake many complicated problems through the complexities of modern industrial structure.

This has not only led to direct State intervention generally for the purpose of safeguarding the rights and interests of all citizens, particularly such as the poorer classes who in the present social structure stand heavily handicapped, but also transformed social services from the philanthropy phase to the constitutional. Social measures are now being more and more incorporated as the basic foundations of national constitutions in all modern countries. At all times for the smooth working of any economy with efficiency and benefit, planning is essential ; much more so in the transformation from a colonial to a national economy.

Really speaking, in the modern world set-up, there is no such thing as a strict national self-sufficiency. Our economic and social needs have become too complex and multi-phased to be circumscribed by lines that conform to accidental national frontiers which are resolved by other accidental factors and not by the economic laws of want and satisfaction. In spite of centuries of industrial experience chaos and distress, Europe has never betrayed any intelligent attempt to organise its economy on a continental basis, except at the machine-gun and bombing point, that too not to bring greater prosperity or comfort to the vast masses but to expand the field of exploitation and to entrench the ruling dictators more securely into power.

A golden opportunity today opens out before Asia—a land which has put greater sanctity on human life than on political power, laid greater store by wisdom than wealth, who once

inspired all humanity with its moral codes and taught the immortal lesson that it is by the common man that a people is evaluated. Today Asia can give a lead in another realistic field.

A transition from a slave to a free economy calls for gigantic adjustments. Nor is the change over as simple as nebulous nationalism tries to make out. The recent World War has completely thrown out of gear the entire world economy. We are confronted by tantalisingly contradictory factors. Whilst production has accelerated by leaps and bounds, we are equally confronted by staggering scarcity on an unprecedented scale. While profits have soared, real incomes have fallen. Black markets have come to be the normal feature of our everyday life. Even as agricultural prices have risen, the condition of agricultural labour has become more depressed. The disparity between the rural and urban communities has sharpened more than ever.

A national economy implies freedom from dependence on foreign credit and foreign markets. If this is to be achieved, it would be immensely advantageous for the Asian countries to enter upon a joint plan for the purpose of pooling together economic resources as well as experience. In a predominantly agricultural economy in which Asia finds herself, the pattern of future land tenure is of crucial importance. So also the basis of its industrial structure. Study and experiment in collective and co-operative farming and above all the elimination of the tragic lag between rural and urban standards of income and living are imperative. Rural economy needs to be put on a national basis and mechanised development to be intelligently and realistically related to rural production, so that the former does not depress or destroy the latter; intensive cultivation, agriculture in relation to exports, all need reorientation, equally with industry. The advisability of nationalisation of large-scale industries, the development of cottage industries by the State, through industrial co-operatives, closer association of labour with production generally, all such vital matters should be decided on as common policies to be pursued with the closest possible co-operation between the countries on the basis of perfect equality and mutual benefit, collecting in a common pool the stimulus of common adventure and the harvest of rich experience for the express pur-

pose of freeing Asia and its teeming billions not only from the thralldom of foreign vested interests, but the equally oppressive indigenous big interests. For there is today a growing tendency in the first instance of local vested interests allying themselves with the foreign, and in the second of entrenching their influence in the new national governments that are rising. Both have to be effectively combated. This is only possible if the people's representatives from each country come together and with a realistic vision and a broad social outlook plan for the new Asia. All economic plans for co-operation should be in terms of the vast long-exploited masses. The people of Asia and of the world must be made to realise that the political and economic emancipation of retarded continents like Asia and Africa have a direct bearing upon the question of world peace. For it is in direct proportion to the strength, political and economic, generated by these continents that the reactionary forces of exploitation retreat. This should be the target of the Asian Relations Assembly, and make the future structure of this continent the dynamo for world progress.

## THE PEOPLE OF AFRICA

**I**NDIA'S raising the question of discrimination against Indians in South Africa, before the U.N.O., posed before the world not so much the problem of the nationals of a country but in reality the fundamental question of racial discrimination and one of the basic factors in imperialist exploitation. The point is of particular interest at a time when the entire shape of empires and colonies is in the melting pot and the bona fides of the so-called British Commonwealth is on trial.

Just as the political emphasis shifted to Asia in World War I, the emphasis since World War II has been shifting to Africa, which very definitely is going to be the dice in the imperialist games of tomorrow. Slowly but surely as the West as a ruling power is being pushed out of Asia, it is seeking to entrench itself in Africa. It is fast becoming the White Man's economic and military base. This is most evident in the case of Britain,

whose "liquidation" of the empire is threatening to take the shape of special concentration in a single continent like Africa.

To most people, especially in the West, British Africa is a dominion enjoying as free a status as Canada or Australia. Few have any clear conception as to the actual reality of the problem and how misleading this picture of Africa is.

Three quarters of the population and four-fifths of the area of Britain's colonial empire are as a matter of fact concentrated in Africa covering an area of two million square miles. Indeed the end of World War I saw the best parts of Tropical Africa come into British hands and it would be no exaggeration to say that the future of Africa is at the moment controlled by them.

The British area is divided into 14 dependencies for the administration of which all the human ingenuities the seasoned Britishers are capable of, have devised a variety of forms : Crown Colonies, Protectorates, Mandates, High Commissioners' territories. But they all conform to a broad pattern : the central authority vested in a Governor appointed by the Colonial Office in London, assisted by an Executive Council consisting of permanent officials also appointed by the Colonial Office, and advised by a Legislative Council with a majority of official members.

The non-official sprinkling is done either by nomination or election according to the particular procedure in each country. The Legislature has no power ; the Governor has the right of veto. The colonies are governed by a bureaucracy subject to no popular control.

As for the nature of the occupation of land, wherever there is a White settler colony, the Africans are generally kept out, although the latter number 32,500,000 as against the 3,500,000 white rulers. This is not surprising for the European era in Africa commenced with the auction of Negro slaves. As Dr. Theal, the historian of South Africa, points out : " The system of Negro slavery caused the colonists to regard the coloured man as property, the hewer of wood and the drawer of water." Thus where the Boers established a republic in Transvaal, its constitution unashamedly stated : " There shall be no equality between the White and the Black either in Church or State." The saga of the White Man's rule in Africa is one of ignominy and in-

humaneness. The children of the soil have been made aliens in their own land, denied common civic rights, debarred from public places, cinemas, gardens, museums, libraries, etc. Segregated in trams and trains; confined to "reservations" like birds in poultry pens; banned from trade in urban areas; allowed to visit certain areas only by permits as though they were habitual criminals. Some fifty-thousand workers are arrested annually merely for violation of such laws. Innumerable regulations have been enacted to keep them on the White Man's farms in semi-slavery. The mouths of those who attempted to protest, are gagged.

### RESERVED AREAS

Of the African's three assets, land, cattle and labour, land is the most vital. Yet for all the size of the country, land has become the scarcest and most precious commodity. For while the people are fundamentally agricultural and a long time will have to pass before they can get settled into substitute occupations, more and more of the land has been alienated to the Europeans.

Then came the special "reserved areas" for the Africans. At the start the chiefs themselves in the face of an alarming encroachment favoured this plan hoping to secure some land for themselves. But in truth the idea was for exactly opposite reasons; that the Africans should be removed from all the lands favoured by the Europeans and they should be left free for untrammelled possession. In the process, the European requirements were grossly exaggerated and millions of acres of extra lands were evacuated and taken possession of.

On one side is this land being kept uncultivated and empty, awaiting an absent European demand. It has come to be known as the "Silent Land." On the other, overcrowdedness. The Commission on the Financial and Economic position of N. Rhodesia, or the Pim Report as it is called, said: "In the district of Abercorn  $5\frac{1}{2}$  million acres of land are reserved for European settlement of which 100,000 have actually been alienated and of these barely 500 acres are actually under cultivation." While in the Fort Jameson district with an area of 500,000 acres

and a population of 54,000 natives, conditions are described as follows : " It is inhabited by two cattle-breeding tribes, but one-third of the area is useless for cattle being infested with flies ; for the same reason, as also scarcity of water, a quarter of the reserve is uninhabited . . . for some 41 square miles the density of population is 119 per square mile."

### PLIGHT OF NATIVES

Cultivation without the necessary long fallow periods is destroying the surface vegetation and bush erosion exists to a considerable extent. An adjacent area of 33 square miles is in a similar condition and has a density of 156" per square mile and in one area 240". In some areas the pressure led to wholesale destruction of forests. Major Orde-Brourie when reporting on labour conditions in Northern Rhodesia did not mince matters : " The inevitable result of exhaustion and erosion of the soil must be obvious ; the agricultural capital of the reserves is being rapidly expended. Not only is the land being thus overtaxed ; the rising generation in the tribes is also suffering from the shortage. The young man anxious to marry and own a hut and field approaches the headman with a request for an allocation of the tribal land, only to find that he has little or no hope of obtaining even a small garden."

### HELPING THEMSELVES

With so much of the land denied them, the Africans have been unable to maintain either their cattle, which was one of their chief occupations, or their subsistence agriculture at an economic level. As the density increased, the land available for grazing shrank. The Report of the Ecological Survey says that in some of the reserves cattle-stocking is so dense as to have reduced the fertile thorn-country to poor grassland showing signs of soil deterioration and sheet erosion, and the need for water has compelled the herds to congregate around the sparse springs of riverbeds, overgrazing surrounding lands and trampling down their fertility to desert level. The problem has been further worsened

by the spread of the tsetse fly. Large areas of potentially fertile land now in the grip of this pest, have had to be left untouched and the Africans with their cattle left to jostle each other in the limited fly-free belts. One of the facts that have contributed to the spread of this pest are the uninhabited "Silent Lands."

Government attempts to combat it have been criminally inadequate. The Veterinary Department confesses in its Report of 1939 : " No material improvement can be reported in the general standards of animal husbandry. . . . No progress is to be expected unless and until the Veterinary Department has sufficient staff and funds to devote to an intensive campaign for development in Native Reserves. . . ." The enormity of the disaster can be gauged if we bear in mind that cattle are one of the African's main assets. The Director of Agriculture stated on the floor of the Legislature in Northern Rhodesia in 1939 : " There was no serious agricultural work in this territory. From 1927 an organisation was built up, which rightly or wrongly concerned solely with European agriculture ; again this was swept away in two waves of retrenchment in 1933." Under these conditions it is obvious the Department has not tackled the problem of African agriculture, while its few resources have been devoted to helping European agriculture.

### TRAVESTY OF THE OLD

Density has also meant that the fallow period is shortened, with rapid deforestation as the result. The Africans are compelled to struggle along with their traditional methods, both injuring the soil and earning less and less in return, yet getting the blame for adhering to the old ways although under the present conditions they are but a travesty of the old.

One of the outstanding ventures by Africans as an accessory to the ordinary native subsistence was the cocoa industry on the Gold Coast. It was a small farm industry and made little extra demand on the resources of the cultivator. But no effort was made to give them skilled knowledge or improve the crude methods of cultivation. It was inevitable under the circumstances and the lack of financial organisation, that the industry should

deteriorate and the cocoa-peasantry pass into the grip of money-lenders.

An enquiry in 1933-34 revealed that nearly 75 per cent. of the crop and 30 per cent. of the farms were pledged and that often a lender expected to secure a gross profit of 100 per cent. on his loan after an interval of even a few months. The Cocoa Commission Report states : " If a farmer has already pledged his farm and has no other security, he may obtain a loan by entrusting a young daughter or niece to the money-lender to act as a servant until the debt is paid. . . ." Almost the entire crop is purchased by 15 European firms, one alone taking about half.

### MINERAL WEALTH

Let us now turn to industries and labour. In modern economy credit and modern implements are supreme. In the colonies the Europeans alone have possessed these and acquired the most promising of the country's riches and have therefore dominated its entire economy. In the British African colonies, of the 200 million pounds invested by Europeans, as much as 163 million is by investors residing in England and 30 million by Europeans settled in the colonies. The greater part of this was in mines which has meant European mining interests digging up the mineral wealth and sending it abroad, the distribution of profits abroad and paying a large share of the taxes on them into the British Treasury. Naturally this has brought little benefit to the people of the colonies. The profits earned by the European settlers have been mainly spent to acquire amenities and public services for themselves.

The African producer has remained without capital or modern industrial equipment and with virtually no opportunity for accumulating capital of his own ; and capital has been the lubricating oil that moves the modern machine of economy. With agriculture and cattle-breeding failing, it is not surprising that Africans should desert their villages in thousands to eke out their existence in mines or other European-owned industries. In some of the provinces, 60 to 70 per cent. of the adults are normally absent



from their villages, resulting in the disruption of the social framework and break-up of family life. The Provincial Commissioners' annual reports graphically state this: "The prolonged absence of able-bodied males and village elders has a detrimental effect . . . large numbers of women suffer constant hardship or are compelled to seek work on the plantations in order to clothe themselves. . . . Gradual depopulation is taking place, huts are in disrepair and there is a decrease in the acreage of lands under cultivation."

### HIGH WAGES

The Pim Report describing the lack of any means for the production of wealth, records; "Such a state of affairs naturally renders ready money scarce; the tax can only be found with difficulty."

In consequence an exodus to secure wages in cash is inevitable . . . the spectacle is presented of an underfed, weakly population with best of its elements drained away by the distant lure of "high wages." In cash, however, these "high wages" worked out to the grand sum of £6 a year. Pressing on this broken humanity was the tax from 7s. 6d. to 15s. annually from every male member.

"It is obvious," says the Pim Report, "that over large areas the local resources of the country are entirely inadequate to provide the tax-payer with the means to pay the amount." For the Report elaborates its investigations which had shown an average income of 1-8-3 pounds *per capita*.

### SPECTACULAR PROFITS

Mining has been the chief industry—gold, diamonds, and manganese. The State having made no claims to the country's mineral wealth, there are neither rights nor regulations to control grant of concessions. Mining has been left untrammelled in the hands of private capitalists who have been able successfully to hoodwink the ignorant chiefs and win concessions on fantastically easy terms. Government has further aided the companies by

imposing very little in the way of taxes. The entire income-tax is paid by them in England. Their earnings have been spectacular.

The Ashanti Gold Fields Corporation which is responsible for half the country's gold production, paid from 1929 up to the outbreak of the war, 100 per cent. in dividends and 50 per cent. to 100 per cent. bonus in fully paid shares or cash bonus. Several other gold and diamond mining companies have been paying the same.

As against this, the rents demanded from these companies are very low and fixed, irrespective of the profits, the maximum rarely exceeding 300 to 400 pounds; while the net profits on the eve of the war were in the neighbourhood of 5 million and more. At the same time the wages of a worker worked out to 26-10-0 pounds a year on 1s. 5d. a day. The maximum in taxes amounted to about 400,000 pounds. It is estimated that on an average the annual mineral exports come to 6 million (they rose to 12 in 1937-38) monies taken out of the country figure around 3 million while about a couple of millions are left in the country.

It is inevitable under the circumstances that the country's prosperity should come to depend on the prosperity of the two industries, mining and cocoa plantations, which between them compose 70 per cent. of the country's exports. Next comes copper whose exports reached the value of ten million pounds a year, half of this sum being taken directly out of the country to pay shareholders, directors, etc.; about a million pounds paid annually in salaries to a few white men, while the African workers who number ten times as many, receive between them a quarter of that sum earning from 6d. to 1s. a day! And those very men have to pay 15s. a year in tax. The wage figures of the South African Union reveal an interesting tale. In 1939, 55,008 white workers received an aggregate of 21,104,467 pounds while the non-Europeans received 14,129,172 pounds—which means that eight times as many African workers received only two-thirds of the total wage sum of the European workers.

### TUBERCULISATION

Only since World War II has legislation been introduced to

recognise trade unionism. Yet even now there are discriminatory clauses in the legislation operating against African workers. For instance, in South Africa, legislation such as Workmen's Compensation Act, Industrial Conciliation Act, Unemployment Benefit Act do not cover the African workers.

The net result of this system is that there is no adequate provision for public services. The absence of statistics shrouds facts. According to the Native Affairs Annual Report, "Mortality is about 22 per cent. under one year and 56 per cent. between one and three years. These figures do not include children who die at birth. The spread of diseases is recognised. The medical Report for 1938-39 says: "The experiment of other African territories indicates that one must expect a steady and probably rapid tuberculisation of the native population." The Pim Report says: "... There is a considerable amount of relapsing fever. Leprosy is widespread; above all syphilis is a scourge and the proportion of infection very high." On the floor of the Legislature, Captain Smith said in 1939: "I am told there is practically no infant native in this country who has not got malarial infection and over half of them enlarged spleens." The Pim Report further states: "... The Public health service is very inadequate and practically no maternity or child welfare work has been done. There is an actual water shortage in many native areas. The existing position ought not to be allowed to continue."

### MALNUTRITION

One of the most potent factors in the obvious ill-health of the Africans, is malnutrition. The Committee on Nutrition in the Colonial Empire pronounces its verdict as follows: "Food deficiency is a predisposing factor in many local disease conditions. Tuberculosis, pneumonia, and bronchitis are very prevalent and together account for 30 per cent. of the deaths. Over 70 per cent. of persons in the coastal towns give evidence of tubercular infection... there seems to be a close relationship between nutrition and the incidence of leprosy in certain areas."

African education is on a par with African health. Until 1945 there was not even a Government department for the Africans'

education. A separate department was created only in 1930. Even now the few schools are confined to urban areas.

These conditions have been strengthened rather than weakened by the war. Huge war profits have added more power to the domination of European vested interests.

The African problem is a world problem, a problem which divides the world between the White and the Coloured, the dominating and the exploited, a basic human problem that can only be overcome with a radical change in our social and economic values and a rational attitude towards them.

## A FACET OF AMERICA: THE T.V.A.

MUCH has been written about the Tennessee Valley Authority or T.V.A. as it is called, in America. There are few amongst the reading public who are not familiar with this project.

But to most it is just an interesting engineering project conceived and realised by the State, one of the few of its kind in America, a land predominantly of private enterprise, where public utilities are all controlled by private companies. Hence the T.V.A. has been somewhat of a novelty and rare experiment. But it has been much more. It has been a veritable epic, a great and growing experience to the people of the Valley, a romance worked out of their hopes and fears, their scepticism and optimism. It is not in terms of the magnitude of the brick and mortar, the size of the electrical gadgets measured. But in relationship to the day-to-day life of the people, the infinite little but significant changes wrought in the life of the Valley and its inhabitants show what strength and economic advance can be achieved by mankind through the wise use of native resources. That is in sooth the real tale of the T.V.A. and its national importance.

Power has been there from the beginning of man's time—even before—when it lay dormant like the Sleeping Beauty waiting for man's magical touch to galvanise it to undreamed of action. Gradually by grappling with it, man subdued it to control. Projects now represent in people's minds the power of man over his environment. But the T.V.A. represents something more, a

co-operative power, the sweet order which is wrought out of fathomless confusion by the simple process of co-operation of big men and little men, of unlettered men and university graduates, with simple faith in each other and in their labour, the symbol of their unity. The construction work brought along with it many new institutions that instilled new interests in the local community and stimulated in it new responsibilities. The job in itself inspired self-esteem. It made their imaginations soar and awakened a new consciousness of developing powers. They responded to the side activities with alert eagerness.

The T.V.A. was born when the tide of America's fortune was low, during the great depression, when it was felt that the widely spreading distress could be avoided only by the use of the Federal power to bring relief to the citizens. Private enterprise was practically paralysed and State power seemed inadequate. Out of this long night of travail was born this project. Its authority was so used that instead of doing things for people it enabled people to do things for themselves. Those small isolated communities are proud and would rather be poor than dependent. To them the essence of the T.V.A. lay in its being the road to independence. The benefits they got were a fair exchange in return for strong muscle and deft skill.

The very setting for the T.V.A. is alluring. It satisfies the yearning for drama and the desire for peace. The springs and rivulets of the mountains yield water in abundance, which the river proudly carries away in its bosom. The plateau is green, brown and grey by areas and seasons. On the west it gives way to slopes of green, of luscious orchards and beauteous cattle, down to the stretches of the blue grass and finally to silky cotton and the old old plantations.

The care-free rushing water is almost a mood of nature. But men can nevertheless bring it under his sway; determine the time and manner of its passage; push it through turbines to produce electric power; release it in such fashion as to make it navigable for ships, manipulate its force to permit it from crossing the soil. Yet, however great the magnitude of the machine, however stupendous the engineering feat, its value and importance can only be measured in terms of their relationship to

human lives, when the quality of these lives can be raised to match the high-power quality of the construction and of the grandeur of nature's setting; when mechanisation touches the very heart of the people to tremble with their weariness and melt with their relaxed limbs and heaving breaths. For when human levels of living and working and the creative abilities of people are not free, then does one truly prepare for peace and for the defence of this peace.

Until the coming of the T.V.A. all public utilities were the monopoly of Big Business, exploited for high profits, normal essential requirements converted into rare expensive articles. Electricity was one of the worst victims. It is said that the Tennessee River made an engineer's fingers tingle, so handy, moving so fast and so far, something just had to be done with it. But tougher than its onward rush was the tussle for its control.

Senator Norris's congressional committee states as follows in its report on this tussle: "In every bid that has been made it has always been discovered that the object of the lease was to get possession, for private profit, of the enormous power facilities which exist." One may almost say that the T.V.A. was a logical process of the times. For there was no other way of establishing the principle which Senator Norris boldly enunciated at the time: "A nation's resources belong to its people and should be used by them for their service."

The T.V.A. simply had to be, for at the end of 1933 there were counties in the southern highlands with more than 50 per cent. of the families on relief. One county had as many as 87 per cent. of relief. The very land was moreover wasting, seven million acres out of twenty-six was suffering from erosion due partly to single-crop cultivation. In a single county 35 per cent. of the land had lost more than one half of its top soil, while 2.9 per cent. had been substantially destroyed. In addition, floods were causing an average annual loss of nearly 2 million for the Tennessee River was then nothing but a destructive force in flood and a useless shoal in drought. Taxes were high, yet there were not enough funds to support good schools, public health and medical services, highways or transport. The farms

were without electricity. And at last a strenuous battle waged for 12 years on behalf of the common people against the combined forces of monopoly and human greed finally ended in the triumphal creation of the T.V.A.'s corporation by an act of the Congress clothing it with the power of government but possessed of the flexibility and initiative of a private enterprise, an original and bold experiment raised on a four-pronged facade ; to harness the river and its tributaries by means of a series of massive dams and reservoirs to prevent floods ; improve navigation ; generate and distribute electricity ; and manufacture nitrates.

President Roosevelt linked it with the other similar projects—Boulder Bonneville and Grand Coule dams and the St. Lawrence power projects—stating that each of these was to “serve as a yardstick,” meaning thereby to try out the comparison of costs between public and private production. Cheaper power within the reach of the average man, power for every home and farm—that was the target.

To keep the programme up to date, the President was directed to recommend to the Congress from time to time such legislation as he deemed proper to carry out specific purposes. “Maximum amount of flood control ; maximum development of the said Tennessee River for navigation purposes ; maximum generation of electric power consistent with flood control and navigation ; the proper use of marginal lands ; proper method of restoration of all lands in said drainage basin suitable for reforestation ; and the economic and social well-being of the people living in the said river basin.” In addition such adjoining territory as may be related to our project, materially affected by the development consequent to this act, was also included. And studies, experiments or demonstrations—all for the general purpose of fostering an orderly and proper physical, economic and social development of the said areas—were also sanctioned.

The T.V.A. had been instructed by the Congress to promote the “economic and social well-being of the people living in the said river basin, and to help the communities appraise and use their resources in the most dynamic and yet prudent way.” The T.V.A. decided on pushing forward with plans for reforestation, scientific agriculture, getting electricity to every farm and the

like. For it saw no reason why a twentieth century farmer should function like a nineteenth century one. It began to buy up phosphate reserves and produce fertiliser materials, finding out the cheapest process. For it thought not merely in terms of chemicals and materials but more in relationship to land, crop, animals and people's lives—in short the development of a rounded community life. To begin with, farmers displaced by the creation of the huge reservoirs were resettled.

The old system of fertiliser production had proved wasteful, for land was commonly fertilised with commercial fertilisers which meant going round in a vicious circle. As the land grew poorer, the farm production got less, the farmers' income fell. He therefore tilled more land, bought more nitrates to grow more, which in turn meant a fall in the price of the raw material. But the T.V.A. altered this process. The people were on the contrary encouraged to grow their own nitrates.

The plan was simple. The farmer was asked to add phosphates to his soil and grow leguminous plants, such as alfalfa, leapedeza, vetch and clover, as they have the quality of nourishing on their roots a certain kind of bacteria which in the process of their life cycle take nitrogen from the air and infect it into the land. One pound of phosphorus used in a fertiliser for leguminous plants may result in four or five pounds nitrogen in the soil. Moreover the planting of such vegetation would furnish high protein grazing as also keep that land from having its soil washed away. Natural rock phosphates were available in adequate quantities nearby.

Then the chemists went to work to get a concentrated form of fertilisers in place of the old which contained only 16 per cent. plant food. When a fertiliser was created it was tried out in experimental farms and control plots. Then it went into use in the demonstration farms selected by the community with the advice of the extension agent, and the candidates chosen to carry them out had to be men who enjoyed the confidence of the community. Each farmer was supplied the fertiliser free with the proviso that the farmer would execute his work in consultation with the county agent or the land-in-grant extension service, for the period set, say, a five-year programme.



The demonstration farm usually attracted the attention of farmers for miles around. In fact the entire community became interested in it. When favourable results showed, the others avidly copied the process. This often led to area demonstrations in which a number of farms participated, sometimes the area running to as much as ten thousand acres. The advantage of such co-operative work was obvious. What an individual could not achieve, the community could ; and where an individual could not afford to invest singly, a group of farmers could buy threshers, grading equipment, top quality bulls and the like, as also derive the best advantage in the marketing. This has stimulated almost an epidemic in better and co-operative farming and a fundamental change from one-crop fibre-economy system of cotton cultivation to diversified farming and established a balanced agrarian economy.

This "white magic"—the fertilising process—is said to make three blades of grass grow where one used to and even on rough and rocky ground. On the average, there was an increase of more than 30 per cent. in the production of foods in the demonstration farms. Farm demonstrations have increased hay production by  $1/3$  ; small grain by  $2/3$  ; corn by  $\frac{1}{2}$  ; cotton and tobacco by one half with hardly any increase in acreage ; milk sales by one half, eggs sales by one half, fruit and vegetable by one half, with hardly any increase in labour force. Here are poured out a variety of whirling materials ; rayon, oxygen, hydrogen, sulphuric acid, caustic soda, phosphorus, methyl alcohol, acetic acid, metal dies, ferro-alloys, fibres and a host of other things.

Nor is this the whole chemistry of the T.V.A. It has started making calcium carbide necessary for synthetic rubber ; production of alumina, the basis of aluminium from mere clay instead of imported bauxite ; extraction of magnesium from olivine instead of brine and sea water.

The fact that these new methods are becoming countrywide is even more encouraging. Between 1935 and 1943, forty-three thousand demonstration farms had sprung up in 28 states covering a total area of 6,375,000 acres. It has been busy building furnaces while side by side preparing maps ; collecting data on

streamflow and silting ; prospecting for construction materials while co-operating with forest services to conserve timber resources. In 1933 the average *per capita* income in the Tennessee Valley was 40 per cent. of the national average ; in 1939 it was 44 per cent. ; by 1945 it was 58 per cent. and the region had come to establish its economic leadership.

Truly did one of the members of the T.V.A. Board fervently wish these "Dams to have the honesty and beauty of a fine tool, for T.V.A. is a tool to do a job for men in a democracy." These dams have converted parts of the Valley into a land of lakes, where there were few before. They possess water enough to cover half of Tennessee State and provide 650 miles of river channel—which means generating enough electricity for more than half a million consumers through municipalities and co-operatives. Thus this region which was once one of the most isolated and backward today hums with incredible activity and has established new economic ties with the great interior regions of the U.S.A.

"The T.V.A. in its 13 years of existence has never hesitated to try new methods, new machines and new ideas. One of its striking characteristics has been a willingness to explore any line of research if it seemed to offer a reasonable possibility of enabling the T.V.A. to do a better job in the unified development of the Tennessee Valley region.

"While the public attention has been focussed on spectacular dam-building and widely publicised electric power operations, a substantial number of vital research projects have succeeded practically unnoticed. Many of the machines, methods and processes which have been devised and expanded by the T.V.A. were entirely new ; others were adaptations of work originated elsewhere and modified to fit the problems of the region.

"The T.V.A. has always benefited in its various experiments by the co-operation of other agencies, federal, state and local, in diverse activities ranging from public health to civil engineering. The examples which follow comprise a partial list of those activities which now engage the attention of administrators, technicians and citizens in their combined efforts to further the development of the Valley." So says David Libenthal who has been chairman of the Tennessee Valley Authority for several years.

The T.V.A.'s contribution to a blending of medical science with engineering and industrial chemistry is little known. One of the fields in which it has made a successful showing is in combating malaria. Improved methods of spraying and dusting from the T.V.A.'s department of Health have been brought into operation along the T.V.A.'s 26 great artificial lakes, while its technicians sway training planes into malaria warfare. As a matter of fact during the war the T.V.A. converted sway planes for dusting and spraying the Pacific malarial areas, and logically enough when the UNRRA started work, it enlisted the T.V.A.'s services to equip planes to be used in malaria-control work in Greece and the Balkans. The T.V.A. has been able to play this noble role in such distant lands because of its very successful experiments in eliminating malaria from its own Valley.

Equally humanitarian is the valuable experiment which is being carried on to find out the relation of human health to soil fertility involving roughly about 80 farms and about 170 individuals of varying age groups for clinical study. The farms are divided into two groups, those using soil mineral fertilisers and the other left unfertilised. Periodical medical examinations are made, with dietary records on food consumption and chemical analysis of foods.

The T.V.A. also experiments in manufacturing industrial objects out of the Valley's resources. One such recent product is tanning used in the manufacture of leather obtained out of waste which used to be burned for fuel, such as pine bark or oak from the saw mill slab file. It also tried its hand at the manufacture of the small threshing machines for small hilly farms, which can be towed like trailers to scattered and remote fields, low-cost barn-hay driers, the special merit of which lies in their preserving the carotene content denoted by green colour and retaining nutrition value by practically eliminating leaf shattering. The U.S. Department of Agriculture, grading hay, found that 88 per cent. of the Tennessee Valley farms provide grades 1 and 2 as against only 35 per cent. from the rest of that trade.

Research in fishing has been another feature which has led not only to the preservation but an increase in fish from 45 to 50 fold. Similarly a T.V.A. method of bending mica sheets has

enabled the American-produced "green mica" as distinguished from the foreign-imported "ruby-mica" to be equal in performance to the latter when the "green mica" was being rejected as useless.

At a time when timber was going out of business, due to rapid liquidation of forests, the T.V.A. forests came to the rescue and actually today 20,000 more acres have been brought under forest cultivation. There are 14 million acres of forest land together with industries that support a hundred thousand persons, and contributing \$100 million to the annual income of the region. The foresters run 400 demonstration areas on private property and more are being established, representing all shades of woodlands, from small farm woodlots of a few acres to extensive commercial timber tracts. Dairy herds now browse on the grassy slopes where a few years ago even a wild mountain hog could have hardly survived.

Community co-operatives have been organised especially for growing vegetables, under which the growers estimate that they are reaping 50 cwt. more a bushel than they did under individual cultivation. Farmers who had never kept poultry have developed an industry of such magnitude that a single farmer now orders 5,000 electric elements for home-made breeders, built by the farmers themselves under the direction of the agricultural extension agencies.

The practice of using portable overhead irrigation on farm crops has been on the increase, showing increased net returns varying from \$15 to \$90 per acre as a result.

All these activities provide a passing yet vivid picture of the splendid work the T.V.A. is doing to provide for the unified development of all the resources of this Valley region. These projects provide new or increased income to the farmers and other settlers of the Valley and offer a definite incentive to enable them to co-operate more fully and effectively in the various programmes launched from time to time, to conserve the wealth inherent in the soil, minerals and forests, even while developing their potential riches for the welfare of the entire Valley community; and incidentally even while helping themselves these humble folks of the land have succeeded in marking their impress on

the world at large.

These miracles have been wrought mostly through local labour, whose imaginations have been stirred by new pictures and expanding prospects. Above all they have tasted of the sweet fruits of orderly disciplined execution of large-scale planning through co-operative effort. Job-training, general adult education, library service, new modes of recreation, refrigerators owned by the community—all these have come to stay and become part of their life. The T.V.A. in a way seemed to take the people into partnership rather than oppress them. It demonstrated that a diversity of physical resources and human talents when brought together by free choice into voluntary co-operation can bring widespread human benefits. As the T.V.A. Report for 1936 stated, "Final success is as much a matter of general consent as of initiative." For the real aim is to make power serve the little men of whom the world is composed, make the independent labour of each productive, lend their lives dignity and beauty.

Power must be built for the use of raising dairy cattle on a far-away farm, for the gardener on a mountain-side, for community gadgets, for production, to save the drudgery of the housewife, give the helpless and old a break, the bedridden the comforts of a radio. It is for such purposes that power is wanted—for creativeness and freedom. For behind the steel and concrete is the real moving human story of the people whose lives have been transformed. For had the T.V.A. been diverted to serve only the giant industries, it would have by-passed the little man in his cabin and on the farm.

But the T.V.A. has by no means had a smooth sailing. It greatly disturbed the power business in and around the Valley by its very existence. Its constitutional authority was questioned 57 times and 26 injunctions brought against it. But it fought and survived and by 1936 the fireworks died down leaving the T.V.A. a "settled and established institution of the country."

Although the T.V.A. is a corporation, its policies do not follow the capitalist pattern. None-the-less its operations remain solvent and business-like. Forty per cent. of the common costs of the dams are charged to power production and payments are made to the States and local units of Government in lieu of taxation

The power-rates set by the T.V.A. for the municipalities and rural co-operatives which in turn distribute that power to consumers, are among the lowest in the States. Still this project continues to reap handsome profits which are used to extend their services or reduce rates further. The high voltage transmission lines extending to 252 sub-stations and thence to many industries and farmers' cottages, a total of 500,000 consumers, form a giant network of 5,200 miles. President Truman recently defined the T.V.A.'s role by asserting, "the T.V.A. has demonstrated democracy's capacity to raise the standard of living, to utilise natural resources wisely and to stimulate and encourage the initiative and enterprise of individuals."

## AN IMPERIAL OUTPOST

THE voyage up to Aden is always dull, so one settles down to a dreary routine without expectations of anything unusual. But something unusual did occur this time that knocked us out of our lazy indifference ; the heat with a capital "H." It was unnatural, cruel and devastating, and seemed to lick us like a wild beast with hot tongues of flame. It was impossible even to feel human. One felt savage. It was like an undeserved punishment that we fiercely resented. We grew sullen and chary of each other as the human kindliness began slowly to dry up within us.

We hailed Aden as Noah must have welcomed the "White Dove." It was like a sign from the gods. The touch of the hard, steady earth restored our lost confidence. We grew human again. The curse seemed to pass.

Aden is evidently the tradesmen's paradise. We got cheated by the taxi-man, the shopkeeper, even by the man selling stamps at the counter. We went to exhilarate our rising spirits with lemonade for we had long lost touch with soft drinks. (The Italian boats evidently observe a kind of prohibition against sweet and aerated waters.) The lemonade tasted queer, like citron water. The proprietor apologised. It was home brewed out of sea-water ! That was Aden. A spirit of caution had by now

begun to steal over us and when we converted some of our currency into the foreign, we could not help showing it to the policeman on duty to make sure those greasy crumpled notes were not faked.

Massawa is an Italian port that only the Italian boats touched at. It originally belonged to Egypt, but kindly Britain who has a characteristic way of being generous at other people's expense, summarily handed it over to Italy without so much as "If you please" to the Egyptians, by way of wooing the insatiable Mussolini and soothing his land hunger. It formed an important base during the Abyssinian war and looked like a war garrison.

There had been considerable excitement on board hours before the boat came into harbour. It was hard to get the staff to attend to their daily duties. As the port was sighted, the ship waxed hilarious. The Italian is very proud of his new Eastern Empire. He seems to take a sort of childish delight in the possession of a new toy, though report says it has turned out a wild-goose chase, and that the much coveted minerals of Abyssinia have proved a mirage. Italy has paid heavily for this folly. There seems to be a shortage of even the bare necessities of life in Italy such as wheat, milk and butter.

As the boat came alongside amidst the band-playing, hand-clapping and shouting, we saw only white faces on the shore; except for the port coolies who were also driven away once the gangway was fixed up. It seemed curious that the port should contain only white men. Sailors and soldiers stood armed with drawn bayonets. We heard faint whispers that some big officer was coming on board.

The chief steward requested that the passengers discard their oriental déshabillé and appear in some "civilised dress" henceforth at the dinner table. We were puzzled and also annoyed. We are terribly touchy about these little things with big implications because of many deep wounds, many scathing humiliations. We were in no mood to dress for some army officers who had been raping Abyssinia.

So, very much on our dignity and trying to uphold the prestige of the coloured people, we protested with indignation. To our utter amazement the steward told us that it was not so much

out of respect for the officers coming on the boat that this dressing was being insisted on but in order to compel the Italian to dress at all now that the boat was in the " Empire waters." When the other people appeared in shorts, and shirts, the Italian would appear only in pyjama without even his shirt. So if he saw his fellow companion in full dress, there was some chance of his getting at least into his second best. That this fear was more than justified we had ample evidence to see in the following days. The Italian Government had grown very sensitive on these symbol questions and they are trying hard to compel those serving in the colonies to develop the habit of dressing in the English sense of the term, for they feel that they would not otherwise command the respect of the coloured man. There was a tradition that the Englishman built up his Empire as much on his sword as on his clothes, and that the crease in his trousers is as important for maintaining the prestige and integrity of his Empire as the Royal Air Force.

As we landed on shore it was obvious that Massawa was expecting somebody, but beyond hushed whispers we could elicit no information. Soon the troops and the sailors with drawn bayonets drew up and made a cordon. The band on the boat began to play. Then amidst the booming, clapping and waving of hands, there arrived four armed men on motor-bikes, followed by a car with armed men and then again four motor-bikes (all evidently pilots), followed by a fleet of cars. Overhead two aeroplanes kept whirring and purring. In the first car was a man in uniform with a lady beside him, who very graciously kept waving to the people and giving the fascist salute. They were the Viceroy and the Vicerene of Ethiopia. For centuries we have been used to this, the same empty pomp and show, the same fear and distrust of the people, for the conquerors earn nothing better, the same gracious condescension, as though they were conferring a favour upon the people by their very existence. " Crowds lined the highway and lustily cheered as their Excellencies drove up," the Italian papers must have reported the next day. It is a pity newspapers cannot tell the truth and paint these real pictures.

Once their Excellencies came on board, the passengers were



given permission to go ashore, although we were first told we would not be allowed. We were excited at the idea of seeing a new port and glad to be able at least temporarily to wipe the nasty taste out of our mouths. Few things have shaken us so much in recent times and made our gorge rise as the conquest of Abyssinia. I still remember reading of the fall of Addis Ababa and the agony the news brought. It seemed so close and personal a pain, too poignant and deep to be merely intellectual or ideological. It was a sorrow we shared with the Abyssinians, a humiliation which sealed us along with them. It came so sharply back to us as we watched this scene, those troops, the warships, the tanks. It was as though we were seeing that butchery all over again.

On the shore a pleasant surprise awaited us. We found ourselves surrounded by familiar smiling faces and our hands grasped and heartily shaken. The Indian community of the place had come to welcome us. We proceeded to their quarters. They live in the same typical Indian fashion. In fact, it might easily have been a chawl in Bombay, the same crowding in two-room flats, the same smell, the same noises, the same tussle, a dozen running to do the same job and in the end nobody doing it. They were mostly from Kathiawar. I found the women-folk shut up in their homes. It seemed so incongruous that these enterprising people with so much adventure in them should wander into strange distant lands, and yet never be able to break away from ugly old conventions like the purdah. They bring these ignorant women out, uprooting them from their narrow little courtyards, bring them into far-flung countries and cage them up. It strikes me as cruel, for the men find a new world in which they struggle, and they conquer it, make it yield to their wishes and soon make it their own. But what have the women, except an unfamiliar world which can never become familiar to them, for they have no opportunity to go out, contact it, learn to feel this new earth, breathe its new spirit. That is why they gave one the impression of being caged.

The Indian community has practically the monopoly of the cloth trade in Massawa and seem to be doing fairly well in their own way. I was told they were subjected to many new restric-

are the "Ruins in ruins." Even the ruins seem to have got battered down into gravel. A few treasures stand, however, to speak of a faded glory. Athens has been described as a split jewel box. But marauders have walked off with those precious treasures and today they adorn many of the art galleries of the European capitals. The few that have, however, been spared indicate the loveliness and grandeur that once was, and it is mostly its memory that lingers like a haunting perfume.

Nor can one escape a great thrill as one stands on the Acropolis and gazes at Athens below, circled by hillocks each with a romantic history of its own. The Hill of the Muses where dwelt the "gods" that inspired mankind to fulfil its destiny in thoughts and forms of beauty, until this mighty colourful wave swept across the western continent, burning out the dross and calling out the finest in the brute. On the slopes of this hill is the prison where great Socrates languished, a grim cave-like room cut into a rock with a square door covered with bars. On the right is the Hill of Mars, where the wise men sat to deal out justice in the dead of night that they may never see the faces of the accused and waver. Below spread the vast Theatre of Dionysus where plays of Sophocles, Aristophanes, Euripides and others were performed, while twenty thousand sat around in the amphitheatre and applauded.

A few temples still stand on Acropolis in a very dilapidated condition. But even in those broken pillars and crumbling walls one sees the perfect lines and alluring curves, each piece a dream in marble, a dream which has lived through the many shattering centuries and still speaks to us of enduring beauty.

Marble, however, is not a rare treasure in Greece. It is almost as cheap as ordinary stone. The hills to the north of Athens were pointed out to us as marble rocks. We descended from the Acropolis into the heart of a very modern city, which has little that is classical about it except the new amphitheatre for Olympic Games, which is constructed on the old model. It looks, however, a poor and depressed city. One misses here the gaiety and the cheer of European capitals. The houses, the clothes of the people, the shops, all speak of a struggling city that is far from flourishing. Yet, it is with a sigh of regret that one traces

one's step back for there is something inspiring in those magnificent ruins and even a prosaic soul cannot but thrill at the touch of the soil that had given birth to an impressive civilisation, the land of Socrates, Pericles and Sappho.

## DENMARK

FROM sunny medieval southern Venice to the beautiful smiling northern Copenhagen is a far cry. Not merely the whole stretch of a continent divides the two, but two totally different philosophies intervene. Italy is today a land of aggression. Its breast is filled with hot lava. Its very birds seem stilled into a death-like silence. As I sailed down its picturesque canals along those ancient mansions lost in some dark slumber of a bygone age, I tried to revive the Venice I had once known and loved in spite of its cobwebby houses and churlish water. But I could not recapture the old tune. It seemed to have cracked and lost itself. The serenaders were there, but there was no more the traditional joyous intrigue in their song. A heavy weight settled on my heart. The soul of Venice seemed to be missing. I was unhappy, I took the fastest train out of this depressing atmosphere.

And there was another world, a world where people neither hurried nor hurried you through life. From a land where bombers buzzed, submarines dipped in and out of your vision, and warships clouded half your view, you were now in a country where soldiers and guns were hardly seen. Even if one did appear occasionally he seemed so bored with his gun as though he hardly knew what to do with this troublesome weight. There is no war in the pure air of Denmark. There is no Army, and is not concerned with preparations for the war. It respects human life and holds it precious.

No account of Denmark could ever be complete without Copenhagen. It is said that Denmark is like a child with a big head, with a capital like Copenhagen. It is something more than a capital, it is the Mecca of the Danes. The dream of all those born outside this city is to see it some day. And those

who go there, it is said, rarely return. We thus find that out of the three million Danes, over 60,000 live in Copenhagen.

You travel to Copenhagen (for it is on an island) in a ferry-train, that is, the whole train is put on to the boat and ferried across. There is a novelty that catches your imagination and you feel at once that you are going to be provided a lot of fun. You find yourself in a very friendly world. The conductor has already made friends with you. He is sure to point out to you all the nice spots and the things to be seen as you rush through the last part of the journey across lovely undulating fields, where red-bronze cows graze and receding bicycles twitch your eyes, for Denmark is the land of cows and bicycles. For a population of three million it has two and a half million cows and there is a bicycle for every third man in the country. You will hear about its first king as you get into Roskilde, for that is where the miracle happened, and the Danish kings have always been buried in the Roskilde Cathedral. Once the people of Denmark were in great distress and prayed to the Almighty to succour them. Then down the river in a boat came a beautiful youth covered with a sheaf of corn. The people took this as a sign from God in answer to their prayer and the youth was crowned king.

The porter touches his hat politely to you as he collects your luggage and gives you an encouraging smile which takes the weariness off you. You have the assured feeling that you are in a friendly land as you lean back in your taxi in which you have been snugly settled by the joint efforts of the porter and the taxi-man. When you arrive at the hotel you will find your hand shaken with the same warmth. In Scandinavia everybody is shaking hands with everybody else. If you let yourself into this country after a few days of the "classy" life of England, you are inclined to get rather unsettled. The Danes, however, have not all those fine distinctions and sensibilities of their cousins across the sea, bless them ! and they are proud of the fact. "We are a very democratic people," they never tire of reminding you. You soon find that this is more than a mere slogan ; it is a living practice with them.

Copenhagen—Kopenhavan as it is called by the Danes—is a beautiful city, of copper-green roofs and towers, and above all,

spires that seem neither old nor new ; of red-bricked zig-zag churches, its quaint cellar-shops, its bright moroque fish-shops. It is really an amalgamation of fishing villages and peasant settlement in a system of estuaries and bogs, fresh water lakes and meadows. Its life is as old as human settlement in Denmark, but its nascent importance dates from the commencement of commercial intercourse which gave a special value to its rich herring fisheries. Soon this rising city became the cynosure of pirates who, after casting a few longing glances at it, decided to dip into its treasures occasionally. To fight this menace Bishop Absalon, the father of Reformed Christianity in Denmark, built a tower in an islet in the estuary called Castle Isle, and here to this day the Castle of Copenhagen rears its haughty head. The Castle Isle is really the heart of Copenhagen, but by filling in the canals and waterways the surrounding islands have been joined to the mainland and today the city covers the same area as Paris, 40 sq. miles, but with just one-fifth of the population of the French capital. The overflow of the city has moved far out into the country and whole villages are being absorbed to build cottage-homes.

The Danes, like the Scandinavians, take immense pride in their Raadhus, the Town Hall. They seem to expend all their genius on it to make it a living embodiment of their highest conception of beauty. The Copenhagen Raadhus is a beautiful red-bricked building, a sort of Nordic adaptation of Florentine renaissance. The main frontage is decorated by a baldachined statue of Bishop Absalon who founded the city in 1167, flanked by minor statues. The roof is unique, lined with statuary of the old-time town-watchmen and the roof-angles decorated with statues of polar bears. The main hall has sober decorations reminiscent of the Venetian-Byzantine style, with a frieze running round a series of lapidary inscriptions, the significant dates in the history of the town. It has a clock that chimes a melody so sweet, that you feel it is worth going to Copenhagen if only to hear those exquisite tones.

Few names, perhaps, have endeared themselves to young and old alike as that of Hans Andersen. One cannot go to Copenhagen without looking out for him. And you are not dis-

appointed. Hans Andersen is still with us and the age of Fairy Tales is not over yet. There in a public garden he stands and on his birthday children and all those who have still the heart of the child, gather round him and read his golden tales. Only Copenhagen could do that for it has the heart of the child. Only Copenhagen could have devised a Tivoli, the pleasure-garden, and have revelled in it as Copenhagen does, with all its childish delight while many a sophisticated foreigner scoffs and shrugs his shoulders.

The Danes, like all their Scandinavian brothers, are good eaters. You get your first shock if you step into a café and order a sandwich, thinking of one of those dainty snacks you get in London or Paris which are so delicate that your teeth have hardly anything to bite into except themselves. You will soon find before you an enormous slice of bread with half a dozen pieces of ham or eggs on it or if you happen to be a grass-eater like myself, large bits of tomato. If you want just plain bread and butter, you will find yourself confronted by an enormous quantity of bread and big rolls of butter. The Danes have at least a dozen different kinds of bread of varying shapes and colour from the sickly white so dear to the English eye to the real black bread one reads of in grim story-books. There is tasty bread, smarting bread, sweet bread, hard bread, soft bread. The varieties are infinite and indescribable. Yet, it needs to be a child to look on that generous plate and enjoy the pile and gorge it with thick layers of butter with no pangs for your waist-line. There is no time of the day when you do not get some meal in a restaurant. The breakfast is available all morning until noon. Then comes the midag, the mid-day meal, which can be had all afternoon until six when you get the dinner up to nine. It is no wonder that Denmark is the despair of tea-drinking Britishers.

The restaurants are as homely as the people and as hospitable. The meal is all spread out on a big table. You just go up to it with your plate and fill it as many times as you like and as much as you like. If you have the rare capacity you can swallow two meals at a go and save the money on the other. That is how Scandinavians believe in eating, not dainty snatches coming

at indefinite intervals. Nor do they eat at short intervals as the Britishers do, who must keep nibbling at their food every couple of hours or so.

Nowhere are the slums of the East End of London to be found. Denmark really deserves a better fate than has fallen to her lot for her efforts have been mainly in the progressive direction. But in a crazy world-system she cannot escape her share. There is a definite effort to fight against drink. The coffee-wagons, mainly run by women, are meant to tempt the thirsty despairing men by a hot cup of coffee with a little sandwich to round off the meal. But nowhere does one see beggary, in the form of street-singers, organ-grinders, pavement artists, faded-flower sellers and the hundred and one pathetic sights so common in cities like London.

Denmark loves dancing. All Denmark dances in its restaurants, eating-houses, cafés. One would hardly expect it for they are rather a slow easy-going people. Perhaps, it is this very characteristic which inspires them to dance. Often in international competitions they carry off the best prizes. Perhaps next to dancing they love gymnastics. The children learn it with their very first movements. The children's crèches, the kindergarten schools, are provided with the apparatus to lure the children into these feats.

The Danish dairies like their breweries are world-famous. It is a real delight to see a Danish dairy at work. Everything is mechanised, except the actual swallowing of the milk. On an average each dairy owns 50 to 60 lorries for carrying the milk from the farms to the dairy as well as for milk distribution. Each has its laboratory where the milk is tested each day, before it is sent out. But the cleansing process starts earlier for the children's and patients' milk for which special farms are set apart, where cows are fed on special diet very carefully prescribed by experts and where the milking machine, or if done by people, their hands, are sterilised before the milk is drawn. Pasteurising is now out of date; it has been replaced by statsnising so that the vitamins may not be lost in the process of boiling. The bottles are cleaned and filled by machinery, 2 to 3 thousand in an hour. The testing of eggs, their numbering and even packing is done by machines. The eggs are put under very powerful

lights and you see the yolk clearly through the shell. The human eye now penetrates through everything, what of a mere egg-shell ! Then they are rattled through huge machinery and sorted out each according to its size and slipped into the packing cases. The extra eggs are preserved in lime water for winter when egg production is low.

One of the most striking contributions of Denmark to modern applied science is the Diesel engine which is revolutionising modern transport. It was the first country to fit it up for the boat. Everybody knows its significance now, how it reduces the running expenses to a reasonable figure. But the cost of building the engine is still prohibitive and Denmark is now working at cheapening it. Then the means of transport will become infinitely cheaper, and the automobile will no more be the luxury of the few, but an easy means of transport for all.

Denmark's contribution to art has been no less. Its industries are better known in its silver work and its porcelain. But the artist who has left his firm impress and has given his country an enviable place in the comity of international art is Bertel Thorvaldsen, the sculptor. He was the son of a wood carver who worked in a shipbuilding yard. His versatility and genius have won recognition and his works today find an honourable place in the museums of all the capitals ; his statue of Pope Pius VII at St. Peter's in Rome, of Copernicus in Prague, of Gutenberg in Mayence, of Schiller in Shittgart, of Poniatowski and Potocki in Warsaw, a host of others too numerous to mention. His tomb is by his own request placed in the open courtyard of his museum in Copenhagen, and there his remains now repose under a shroud of Evergreens amidst those gods, demigods, heroes, and artists whom he created out of his rare genius. The most touching is his own image carved with great strength and feeling in which his arm is being upheld by a statuette of Hope.

Copenhagen can boast of many beautiful castles ranging from the exquisite Dutch renaissance at Rozenborg and Fredericstorg to the magnificent Rococo Palace of the Prince, now housing the National Museum. But the one so dear to every heart, setting ablaze our romance and love of tragedy, is Kronborg which Shakespeare has immortalized in his *Hamlet*. Cruel sceptics will



tell you that Hamlet, the real Prince of Denmark, never lived there but in some obscure place in Jutland. But we shall not heed them. If sceptics had had the run of this world they would strip it of all romance. After all, life without its many lovely illusions would be unendurable. So we wend our way to Kronborg, a lovely rugged pile with its inevitable copper-green spires. If you had the good fortune to cross over from Sweden to Elsinore through the Sound, the view of Kronborg is something unforgettable. It is a lovely dream, a dream which has such a lasting quality as though nothing could ever disturb or mar it. And there you see the bastion where the unfortunate Prince is said to have conversed with the ghost of his father. I saw *Hamlet* actually enacted there in Kronborg, and we saw something more than a play. We lived through a hundred human emotions in that unique memorable setting.

## GHOST CITY OF NANKING

THE route between Shanghai and Nanking, which was one of the main arteries of China, is today one of the most deserted and dismal. An erratic train-service runs between these two outposts, for sabotage on the line is so persistent and menacing that few trains ever reach their destination. I entered this gamble train holding my life literally in both my hands. The booking-office man thought I was crazy to go on a joy-ride in a "death-train" as it was called. The very danger seemed to allure. The train was 12 hours in starting, waiting for the "all clear" signal. But the signal was an illusion for the track was infested by saboteurs. The land along the route is fertile and one sees plenty of green and plenty of water everywhere. But so little of life. Big farms lie abandoned. The few homes that escaped destruction are falling into disuse.

The story of the Chinese migration is almost unprecedented in history. No exact figures are available but millions had moved across this vast continent over an area of 1,500 miles. Of these 10 million were assisted by Government. The rest adventured on their own. It is inconceivable that peasants sprung from this

ancestral soil bound by countless ties of sentiment to a land hallowed by their faith and the bones of their ancestors, their one means of livelihood, should have also willingly left it at the call of their country. What indomitable spirit was it that moved them? What superb optimism? It is almost like a myth.

Everywhere was great devastation. The whole war drama seemed to unfold itself as one crept up the very road along which had moved the Japanese invading army. All along the railway track every few yards stood a soldier with a pointed gun. There was a tense heaviness and strain in the atmosphere. The passengers were silent and only indulged in occasional whispers. Every time the train moved again after a stop, uniformed men came along and searched the person of every passenger. At every station long lines of men and women were waiting as at Shanghai.

I saw a few Japanese women in uniform assisting the soldiers to search the passengers, but they looked rather powerless to check the brutality of the men.

Evening was creeping over the world bringing with it the twilight hush. The sharp angles of the landscape were being softened in the greying light. It was as though some kindly hand were trying to cover up the gaping wounds in this torn countryside.

We are now nearing Nanking. Suddenly I gave a gasp of thrill. There before me stood the Great Wall of China even as it had stood through the centuries, silent and gaunt witness to how many scenes and events! How childish and futile would the effort seem today to build a wall to keep off the outer world. Yet while the Maginot Line and the Stalin Line have cracked and collapsed, here stands this superb structure, ageless through the ages, immovable through swift-moving time, almost a challenge to the ravages of nature. It has withstood not merely the ruthless hand of time, it has defied the weapons of modern warfare. The Japanese brought their artillery to hammer on it—again and again the columns were hurled against it but to no purpose. Every wave merely dashed against it into pieces like delicate china crashing to the floor. In desperation the Japanese command ordered the soldiers to scale this unbreakable wall. The suicide squad as it reached the top became an easy target for the Chinese

guns within the wall. One by one they fell like dry leaves softly slipping to the ground. Slowly the dead mounted up. The Great Wall consists of two walls running parallel to each other with a corridor between. This gap filled up slowly with the falling dead and on this bridge of corpses the Japanese army secured a footing to pour into the city—not only the Chinese but today even the Japanese have a superstition about a wall that even modern batteries could not pierce.

No taxis were available at the station. I took a bus to the hotel where I knew a room had been reserved for me. A few yards ahead at the city gates, we were made to alight, and our bags gone through once again ! Here I witnessed the same gruesome scenes, people being beaten and kicked.

The place seemed oppressive, as I strolled out into the night. Here was a ghost city. Even babies seemed to hush their cries. Long afterwards in Chungking I recalled this experience. What a contrast the two were ! One was dead even in the midst of quiet—the other alive while death rained around.

In the morning I tried to contact Wang Chiang-wei's Secretariat. Nobody at the hotel knew its location. I tried the travel bureau but with no success ; nor could any of the offices around give the information. Japanese soldiers were in evidence everywhere. In fact Nanking was like a military camp, although it was supposed to have an independent Chinese Government. Of the original million and a half population of Nanking barely two hundred thousand remained, with hundred thousand Japanese troops for the protection of Nanking !

After two hours of fruitless search I decided to abandon the hunt for the new Government headquarters. It seemed incredible that people should not know, but it was true nevertheless. I decided to do some sight-seeing on my own until luck should come my way. The first thing I naturally thought of was the Sun Yat-sen memorial. Here again I met with continued disappointment. " We never heard of this gentleman " came the single answer to any persistent query. " The father of the Chinese people " I tried with no better result. This seemed terrible and then it dawned on me that he must be known by his Chinese name, something I had entirely omitted to acquaint

myself with.

I met the members of the Wang Chiang-wei's Government. Wang was the only impressive person in that group. Undoubtedly one of the ablest and cleverest, he was once the right-hand man of Dr. Sun, with General Chiang running a close race with him. In fact so commendable were Wang's interpretations of Dr. Sun's teachings that they were prescribed as texts in schools. Ten years ago Wang indulged in one of his usual coups to unseat Chiang and failed. The rivalry persisted. Intellectually Wang may be superior, but he lacks Chiang's driving power and strength of purpose. There seems an inherent flaw in Wang's character. Each still proudly claims to be the one and only custodian of Dr. Sun's teachings. Quiet, undaunted Madame Sun, however, is dissatisfied with both. Alone she is bravely struggling to keep green her husband's principles.

The Wang Government is one of the most pathetic sights. Torn by internal conflicts, harassed by Chinese terrorists, it drags on an unenviable existence. It has no army of its own and is completely at the mercy of the Japanese Government's continued attempts at rapprochement with General Chiang. Last summer he took a trip to Tokyo in great desperation. "You better decide whether you want Chiang or me," he threatened. The Japanese Foreign Minister shrugged his shoulders and drawled out in the slow, sleepy way, so characteristic of the Japanese. "Is that so?" *North China Daily News* Wang's paper, made a vague comment: "Wang's mission to Tokyo has not met with the success that was expected." To pacify this recalcitrant and prevent a volte-face, the Japanese Government offered Wang a loan with which he was to purchase Japanese goods to meet Nanking's needs. But Wang knew this was only a clever manoeuvre to get rid of the quantities of worthless Japanese paper "Yen" strewn around the Shanghai markets and which everybody kept successfully smuggling into Japan much to the Government's consternation.

## CHUNGKING

CHUNGKING, the wartime capital of China, has in recent years become a veritable place of pilgrimage. When I went there, the route to Chungking was limited to a single air-service connected with Burma on the west and Hong Kong on the south. The air service was a daring venture that spoke volumes for the dogged determination of the Chinese. It has a waiting list longer than that of any other service in the world ! Wide-eyed people with bated breath made the hazardous trip to see this wonder of a new world being created out of the ashes of the old.

The only feasible communication between the east and the west of China is the Yangtse River that literally flows down from the Szechwan Province where Chungking is situated, eastwards along which the industries and commerce of China grew, down to the main port of Shanghai—China's main outer gateway. Up this river moved the great migration barges heavily loaded with goods from the invaded area, pulled by strong hands. Whole factories, school equipments, museum treasures, laboratories, motor cars, lorries, railway carriages, even rails and sleepers, in short anything that could be carried. For months the indefatigable Chinese dragged these heavy loads up this great waterway—their one unfailing life-line to transplant old China on a new soil and preserve her freedom.

Chungking balances itself on the hill-tops, steep and severe like a fortress. The plane as it approaches the city heaves over peaks, curves dangerously and bends in and out of hills and suddenly slips on to a narrow stony strip of land along the Yangtse River. The usual generous open airport is not to be seen, nor the hospitable rest-room. All around is bleak and barren with sheer mountains rising on all sides. Two large cloth umbrellas shelter the few immigration and customs officials, while people stand around indifferent to sun and rain alike.

Where was the city and how did one get there ? I was puzzled. " You cross the river in a sampan (a Chinese craft) and then get carried up in a sedan chair," someone informed me. In

Chungking you are either ascending or descending.] Everything about Chungking is strenuous.

I had been told Chungking is hot and steaming, so I had not brought a single warm garment. After shivering all night in the plane, I shivered a little more when I landed. The cold ate into my bones as I sat in the air-raid shelter two hours later. By afternoon I was sweating. I returned to bed lightly clad, fanning myself. By midnight I had slipped under two blankets, by morning I was crying for more. Chungking weather makes the notorious English weather seem sober and normal.

According to all reports the ravages in Chungking are far greater than in London except that the former do not get the same publicity. I landed myself in one of the worst raids of the season, continuous for nine days and nights the kindly moon being on, with short respites no longer than a couple of hours.

The first severe raid on Chungking transformed the mid-town section of the city into a mad inferno of flames. Seven huge conflagrations were counted at nightfall, roaring through the heart of the city, a mile and a half wide and half a mile broad. By the time night fell the red glow of the flames illuminated the countryside for miles around.

The conflagrations razed four-fifths of Chungking including the once busy down-town district. Streets, lanes and shops and civilian quarters were turned into heaps of charred ruins, and in between them stood a forest of gaunt walls bearing testimony to the city that once was before these devastating raids.

Forces of reconstruction were at work immediately. Chungking was being given a new facade. Most of the tall buildings four or five storeys high were gone after the attacks. Out of the ruins rose mostly one-storey structures, but nevertheless bright and compact shops and houses.

A walk along Chungking's main thoroughfares will find every shop busy and the streets thronged with pedestrians and vehicles. Life is carried on in hastily improvised structures built out of material retrieved from the ruins. Buses are crowded to capacity. In spite of continuous raids, normal life goes on as best it can. Offices start work before seven and put in two to three hours of work until the bombers arrive. After the all-clear is

given late in the afternoon, work is resumed again. But it is not quite so simple as all that. The experience is pretty shattering. On an average well over a hundred planes came in a day in four waves of 27 to 30 each, sometimes even over 60 planes at a time, and on an average each plane drops six to eight bombs, depending on the weight of the missiles.

The Japanese, luckily for China, rarely come when weather is bad. So bad weather is good weather in Chungking. Moonless nights are also comparatively free from raids. But the raids have increased in intensity from year to year. Yet more people have kept coming into the city and there is more business all round. Even as the all-clear sounds, the clean-up men get busy. Linesmen try to hitch up the wires by evening. People bombed out of their homes and shops collect what is left, straightaway start building temporary shacks, prepare tea over camp fires and share their troubles with the neighbours. There is an air of friendliness and comradeship everywhere and no sign of panic or despair. Sometimes the bombs fall into the river bringing to the surface such fish as had never been seen before—a boon to the fishermen.

The Chinese A.R.P. system is one of the best in the world. People come from all parts of the globe to study it. China has two unique advantages: mountains and vast areas. The mountains offer unlimited shelters—caves blasted out of rocks that can house nearly all the population of the city in perfect safety, so nobody need get killed except through personal negligence.

The 500-meter tunnel in the down-town section of Chungking, as an air-raid shelter has today become one of the wonders of the world. In the early days it was the scene of a great tragedy when hundreds died suffocated due to lack of air. Today, however, efforts have been made to make conditions relatively safe. The tunnel has three entrances, one a 20-meter sloping stairway. As a protection against splinters a thick stone-wall has been built. A 50-meter space in the middle of the tunnel has been marked off to be left open with a section which leads to a dead end. At the safe rate of ten persons to each meter there is total accommodation for 4,100 people. On one side are two rows of seats, one consisting of benches and another of airtight wooden boxes. The seats on the other side are of stone. A drainage

system keeps water away from the tunnel. The power for lighting and ventilating is generated by a Diesel engine installed in a room beside the entrance; run on vegetable oil.

The enemy planes have to traverse long areas of free China before getting at Chungking. This serves to give the cities a fairly long warning. Two methods are used for this. On every hill-top is a pole. When the Japanese scouting planes start from their far-off base, a triangle is displayed. When the bombing planes take off, a big red ball is hoisted; when they enter the Province, two red balls go up, and when they near the city, both the balls come down. With the first ball people start packing and getting ready for the shelters. The second warning finds them on the march. This is, indeed, an impressive sight—hundreds and thousands walking in single file in perfect silence, carrying their precious belongings, babies strapped to the backs of women, occasionally swinging the sick or the disabled. Each is supplied with a ticket marked with a number of the shelter allotted to each. Only in that particular shelter, will the holder of the ticket be admitted. Nobody is permitted to leave before the all-clear is given.

There is another mode of warning which is more graphic, but works with the same clock-work precision. At every cross-road is installed a huge circular board representing a sort of map. The centre is painted red to indicate the city. In the distance are marked the Japanese bases with a couple of toy planes at rest. When the bombers begin their journey towards the city the toy planes begin to move on the board. At short intervals, the Chinese listening-in posts throughout the area which the enemy bombers traverse, keep on sending messages to the capital, giving the exact position of the planes. So roughly over two hours one can arrange one's schedule, watching this apparatus, as one would the hands of a clock. I once did a whole morning's shopping with its aid.

The baptism of fire, which Chungking underwent in two summers, helped in the construction of new roads. As a result of the extensive destruction, streets were widened, the ground was levelled and old houses were razed to make way for new ones



When many eating-houses were destroyed in air raids, the Bureau of Social Affairs of the Chungking Municipal Government opened fourteen public dining-halls to serve food at prices much lower than those charged in ordinary restaurants. The Bureau also purchased cooking utensils, bowls, chopsticks and spoons to give to those who had lost their all.

To check unreasonable increase in commodity prices the authorities have also established a chain of public stores to supply daily necessities to the public at prices lower than those quoted in the open market.

Chungking, the headquarters of China's gigantic forces of resistance and reconstruction, while it lacks Peiping's imposing structures, has a superb moral stature that has won it the world's homage. Here are gathered today experienced men and women who have gone into voluntary exile for the sake of national freedom. Here they pool their knowledge to serve their country's cause, isolated from the world, struggling to live on pitifully scanty supplies.

My trip out was even more exciting than my trip into Chungking. The Air Service has no fixed schedules. If you wish to leave on a particular day, you need to start making attempts well ahead. The timings are entirely determined by raids. Having to fly over "occupied" territory necessarily confines the trip to night-time, usually after midnight. I had already made one fruitless attempt the first night. The next night after a long wait the outgoing plane arrived towards dawn. Almost simultaneously sounded the air-raid alarm. We took off immediately, and seemed to fly for hours indefinitely, unaware where we were heading for. All we knew was that we were flying for dear life. But we had to sit tight as though it were a most normal trip. After four hours we landed in a tiny military field, to wait there without shelter, without food, until the generous darkness should descend to give us safe passage over the enemy-occupied country. Looking like an illuminated carpet Hong Kong was already asleep when we came in. We had been on the aerial "road" almost 24 hours, to cover a distance that normally takes less than five hours. Still I felt it was worth it, every single moment of it. I only regretted it had all been so brief.

